By the same author.

I Go West.

Oh! You English.

The Pulse of Oxford.



D. F. KARAKA

OUT OF DUST

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To Mac

....remembering a drive down an encircling road and the things that were left behind, remembering wistfully a design for living, which might have been the pattern of my life.....to Mac....because he helps me to recapture a past which has faded with the years — the rain pattering on the boulevard, the snow falling heavily on Tom Quad and the negro voice lifted as an offering in some Montmartre shrine.....to Mac....because he is aware of the compelling sincerity of our struggle for freedom — a struggle which must one day come to an end and because he understands the inner conflict within me and appreciates shades of difference which to others are imperceptible.....to Mac....because he lives in the present — in the India which wants to be strong and unafraid.

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Lead, kindly light, midst the encircling gloom,
    Lead Thou me on;
The night is dark and I am far from home,
    Lead Thou me on;
Keep Thou my feet, I do not ask to see
The distant scene; one step enough for me."

— *Cardinal Newman.*

PREFACE

TO WRITE ON GANDHI IS LIKE GOING ON A PILGRIMAGE. The path to the shrine has been trodden by a distinguished line of pilgrims in whose wake I follow.

With the whole mass of literature, which, as bibliography falls under the heading of *Gandhi*, it is difficult to find many details about his life, which are not already known to that host of readers, who have read in turn Gandhi on himself, Andrews on Gandhi, Rolland on Gandhi, Robert Bernays and Glorney Boulton, Joseph Doke and Holmes, and that whole crowd of authors and authorettes, who have written on this one great Indian theme.

Wading through this colossal bibliographical list, I have wondered what I would find in my own book which would be different. I could not change the life of the man, nor could I at this late stage in his life profess to come in as a biographer discovering new and illuminating details about him which have escaped the others. Nor has this been my intention. I have preferred to stick to my original purpose, which was to chronicle the events

that have led up to the new India which has grown up with me, and to find out for myself the story of my country in relation to the one man, who was most closely associated with it — a story, which though told in many books, still remains for an Indian as fascinating as ever.

My appreciation of this story is my own. The things I have found in it which interest me are often different from those which have pleased the others. I have studied it not as if it were a treatise on politics or religion or philosophy, but as a human document which has emerged from the India of my time.

The years at Oxford and in England sometimes made it difficult for me to approach India in the Indian way. Even now a simple approach does not come natural to me, and I find I have a sneaking regard for that which is subtle and sophisticated in life as opposed to the things which I find in India, which are often simple and obvious.

There are many others like me who have this mental make-up. Of us I would say that we believe but we do not always understand, for we find ourselves torn between rival loyalties. Perhaps "loyalties" is not the appropriate word. The loyalty is only to our country and our people. But there is a perpetual conflict within us between this instinctive loyalty and the ideas we have acquired from a sophisticated western education. Perhaps with greater patience we could end this conflict. The life of the Mahatma shows what infinite patience, self-sacrifice and high-principled living is required of us if we are to do something for our people, whose backwardness is appalling, and help them to break through the illiteracy and the superstition and the prejudice of many years.

I found it necessary, therefore, to acquaint myself first with the struggle of the Indian people and the work of Mahatma Gandhi. They are really indistinguishable. In this book, I have tried to tell myself — and those who may read the book — this story of a country struggling to be free and of a man who set it on the path to freedom. I cannot say that mine is an unbiased story. I found too early in the writing of it that I could not keep pace with

Talleyrand's standard of narrative, when he said: "Je ne blâme, ni n'accuse; je raconte." For although I can come to it with a mental aloofness and a distance that gives perspective, I come too near to it with my heart. It brings out in me that something inherently Indian, which I was afraid might have been washed away by the long absence from home. If only to have found that this emotional bias is still in me, I must regard this book as having been worth writing.

April 1940. D. F. Karaka.

I

SILHOUETTE

It was an ordinary March evening, and I had parked the old Buick along the drive to see the sun set over the Indian Ocean. Against the richness of the sky, I saw a dark silhouette move along the pebbled beach. A man — I judged from his nakedness, for his body was bare up to his girdled loins — short, twisted, almost deformed. It revealed a form which had bent under the burden, but which clung to him even as his shadow that trailed behind. Nobody knew who this man was, or where he had come from. He was only typical of the poverty of India — just one of the three hundred and seventy million, and it was because of the Hindu temple that stood out on the hillock across the way, with its golden dome glistening in the last rays of the setting sun, that I guessed his nakedness had some meaning and his unmarked path a possible destination.

My own imagination gave him caste, for caste seemed essential. Without it, this dark shadow across the horizon symbolized nothing. To me, therefore, he was

unmistakably a caste Hindu. His body — fragile, delicate, worn-out. One could not yet get used to the idea of an untouchable walking so near the sacred temple. But mine was a wild guess, for in the blue-redness that was in the background, and in that fading twilight hour, it was difficult at that distance to recognise this form with any definite precision. Nor was this important, for with or without him, India would still go on.

The darkness fell and with it the street lights came on one by one, twinkling at first, but shining brightly as the darkness grew more and more intense. Sometimes the strong headlights of passing cars would fall on the beach below and sweep over that endless expanse of black darkness to reflect for a brief moment in the water. But the silhouette was no more to be seen and his naked form had vanished into the night.

It was a grand illusion. Yet it was, without doubt, Indian. It belonged to the India of the people — that simple, unsophisticated India of the same three hundred and seventy million. It was dark, yet there was a consciousness within me that tomorrow there would be another dawn. Half-dead as was that crippled figure of humanity that had walked like a shadow before my eyes, tomorrow there would be life, I knew. Tomorrow more upright figures would walk along that little stretch of pebbled beach. Tomorrow those heads would no longer be bowed, or those bodies bent — for the last of the crippled and the infirm was now on his way to the temple yonder across the way and God in His kindness would henceforth reflect his image in a stronger frame. India must go on.

I am trying now to pay my tribute to the one man who instilled in me this faith in the India of tomorrow. He has made me realise that there is something inherent in man and nature that supplies the urge to live in spite of shadows that have come and gone and sunsets that have faded at the other end of the world. This man is Mahatma Gandhi. His full name is Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, He is also known as Gandhiji, Mahatmaji and to some more intimate friends he is Bapu — a

father. Like the shadow across the horizon, he too has come out of nowhere to walk along the pebbled shore of India, his dark body silhouetted against the redness of a political sky and in the darkness and the quiet that will follow, even he will have gone. Yet this India will still go on, the India which he has awakened from its slumber. It is with this realisation, this answer even to "After Gandhi — what ? " that I begin this somewhat simple narrative of a great countryman of mine — a little man who has played a unique role in the history of India.

The world knows him as a headliner of the first importance. Like the Attaturk in modern Turkey, like Hitler and Mussolini in their Fascist empires, like Lenin in Russia, he is reckoned as an influence that has dominated the mind and heart of one great people of the world. Unlike the dictators, who have thrown their weight all over the face of Europe, unlike the Kemal who swaggered in a top hat and striped trousers, unlike Lenin who forged Soviet history with hammer and sickle, Gandhi has been the quiet, shy, unassuming little man, loved because of his simplicity, admired by his followers because of his complete lack of affectation, and even worshipped because of the religious atmosphere which he creates.

"L'etat c'est moi", he has never said. Yet without him it is impossible to understand the India of my time — the new India that awoke one morning and found its soul. His life has punctuated the history of modern India, even as Christ dated the Christian era. The difference, however, is that Christ has always been regarded as the Son of God and not as of the flesh. For Gandhi I claim no spark of the supernatural. I only claim that he is undoubtedly sincere. One has to concede him that, whether one agrees with his principles or not. Those who have read his life, from whatever angle it may have been written, have found in him a somewhat naive, almost childlike personality, which, though it did not impress you at first, made you at once sympathetic. He grows on you even as a familiar landscape.

Perhaps posterity may one day bestow saintliness on him. Of that I cannot judge. The Indian of tomorrow, who has never seen the living image, may find inspiration in the moral when it cannot in the man. But to me it is the man, whom I could see and touch and knew was human, that has been the source of inspiration—a frail little man whom Monsieur Rolland saw with a thin face and rather large protruding ears, eyes that were soft and dark, his head covered with a little white cap, his body clothed in coarse white cloth, bare-footed. That is the man I too have seen. That is the man whose power I have felt in the India in which I was born and bred. I have watched him grow from a minor disturbance into a Mahatma. I have liked him, disliked him, worshipped him, criticized him, but he has always been before me —an influence I could not escape. To us he has been a great and living moral example. But for him this country of ours would still be lacking in self-respect. He has been the source of an inspired India and to many thousands his story is not the story of a man but of an ideal. Whatever shortcomings he may have — for he is human — I feel that out of dust he has made us into men. For a young Indian like me this is a great feeling.

II

IN THE BACKGROUND

IT WAS ON THE SECOND DAY OF OCTOBER IN THE late eighteen-sixties that to the Dewan of an Indian State another son was born. It was by his fourth wife. Gandhi's father had married thrice before and thrice fate had snatched his spouse from him. Then came his last wife, Putlibai, and she bore him a daughter and three sons. Gandhi was the third son and the last child. It seems as if the destiny of the millions that were India had at last fulfilled itself when, after such persistence, it was reflected in that child Mohandas. But Gandhi was essentially of the flesh, too much the ordinary child, who was nursed at his mother's breast, and who cried as children do to make their lungs strong.

The Indian States of his childhood were like some of the pre-war Duchies of Central Europe, steeped in an atmosphere of diplomacy and intrigue. There was something crudely barbaric about them. They retained the old theories of despotic Government, and absolute sovereignty was an idea very dear to their hearts. The

people bowed low in the presence of their ruler, worshipping him even as the Red-Indians worshipped their mighty chieftain. The royal courts of these States retained their medieval splendour. The man who succeeded in life was the one who pandered to all the warring elements, and who stood out among the common people as the most cunning of them all. That was the key-note of power, the only way to gain the favour of the ruling prince. It was in keeping with the temperament of a people who retired from the presence of their ruler without turning their backs on him, and with their hands held in the manner of begging alms. It was nothing more than the hero-worship of one who, by reason of birth, had become their sovereign lord and king. Monarchy as it existed in an Indian State was not a democratic institution. It was not dependant on the will of the people. It was the embodiment of an unstable and somewhat precarious power that had fallen into the hands of a few individuals who rallied round one central figure.

The Kathiawar States were not in any way different from the others. They were independent, and their rulers had full sovereign powers over their respective territory. They were in the middle-west of India and Porbander, where Gandhi was born, was the "White City" on the Sea of Oman. The *lascars*, whom you have seen on a P & O. boat, are of the cruder Kathiawari type. There is something deformed about their physiognomy and like aborigines they do not aspire to any great stature. They have not the manly presence of the Rajput or the Pathan, nor even the refined and chiselled features of the Kashmiri Brahmin. The Kathiawari is generally unimpressive. He is the type of Indian furthest away from all sophistication.

Even today when you see Gandhi squatting on the floor with his legs crossed, spinning at the *charka*, with his large ears, his unsensuous mouth, his somewhat unsophisticated smile, you become conscious of the Kathiawari in him. Caste marks its children deeply, Phillip Guedalla has said.

Gandhi was nurtured in no great cultural surroundings, but he has reflected in his philosophy of strict abstinence the tenets of the rigid Jain school of Hinduism, to which he belonged. "Thou shalt not take the life of any living creature," was the first commandment, and meat-eating to the Gandhi family had always been a major sin. That was the most conspicuous feature of his environment — conspicuous to us, who look with gleaming eyes at a steak which is juicy, and a veal cutlet, which flaunts an egg and crossed anchovies on its bread-crumbed bosom. To Gandhi it was so fundamental a principle of life that it was never regarded as an abstinence until the meat-eaters were pointed out to him. But the serpent, who came in the form of a friend at school, made him taste forbidden flesh, and he fell, because he was weak and because he used to be haunted through the night by visions which were frightening. He wanted to be like those who ate meat — strong and brave and fearless. But it was not for long. When the time came for him to go to England, his mother who was then a widow, and who never knew her son had "sinned," took from him a vow to abstain from meat-eating as she thought he had always done. That vow given as vows easily are when we young men see the vision of that far-off continent of Europe, he has kept even to this day, though by now his palate has accustomed itself to a diet, which is more tasteless than even the vegetarian fare of his early days in England.

About his early youth there is nothing outstanding. At school he was abnormally mediocre. Mathematics worried him. His spelling was bad. His hand-writing was shabby and showed signs of neglect. But for a trifling incident when he refused to look over someone else's shoulder to find out the correct spelling of the word "kettle", his school days were eventless and there was nothing in them to stamp him as a youth of any great promise. He never went to preach the gospel as Christ did, even as a comparative child. Instead, Gandhi had merely lurked in the kitchens of the palace in somewhat dubious company, acquiring gradually a taste for the meat

which his friend attempted to prepare in as palatable a fashion as he could. Nor had Gandhi's reading of books gone any further than those strictly prescribed for his work, and he seems to have led that aimless life which, as the son of a Dewan of an Indian State, was fit and proper to lead.

The monarchies of India laid down no high principles for their subjects to follow. They were the great heritage of leisured unemployment, carried on through the generations, alike in King and subject. Such was the tradition of the ruling princes at that time. As the son of a Prime Minister, the young Gandhi showed a greater aptitude for it than the poor man's son. Even so, there was one redeeming feature about the cult of do-nothing. It had a strong religious flavouring, for as a youngster, Gandhi would sit with his legs crossed, and shaking his head in tune with the straight-jacketed rhythm of the recital, he would listen with rapt attention to the Bhagvat Gita, the Hindu Iliad with the allegory of Spencer and a suggestion of the cadence of the Old Testament. It is to this same Bhagvat Gita that he has turned for comfort on many occasions in his chequered career.

*

Early at the age of thirteen he was married to a girl chosen and approved of by his parents. Marriage then was a sort of slaughter of innocents. His brother, his cousin and Gandhi himself were sacrificed at the altar of Hymen on the same fateful day — six young children paired off in two's for the sake of convenience and on grounds of economy — children, who were about the same age as the young Gandhi. It was the right thing to do in the India of that day. I do not think these children were aware which of them had been cast in the lot as companions for life. They were married with the benediction of a religion that knew no divorce and in which Fate worked in queer ways its wonders to perform. But the die was cast and Gandhi says of his marriage: "Two innocent children were unwittingly hurling themselves into the ocean of life."

I do not question the right of Hinduism to inflict itself on the young and the innocent. You cannot question a Hindu custom any more than you can say 'why' to an English proverb. It is the perpetuation of that bond of marriage between two people, who had never given their consent to that bond, and if they had, were not in a position to do so, that is an indictment of the religion, which allows such bonds to be created. Marriage then becomes nothing more than "the prospect of good clothes to wear, drum beating, marriage processions, rich dinners and a strange girl to play with." It becomes a form of sexless, companionate marriage with this difference that, when the period of probation is over, you still have to stick to your bride.

That is, I am afraid, the plight of many a Hindu husband, who has grown up to realize that he has been bound for life to a woman, not of his choice, and that there are now only two alternatives offered to him where passion or carnal desire remains unsatisfied. It is either repression and self-control, or the gloomy prospect of a local brothel. I say this of early Hindu marriage in general, with no reference to that of Gandhi. However, Gandhi's friend of his younger days, the same that made him sin by tasting forbidden meat, succeeded in leading him to the doors of the house with the red lamp. Gandhi entered. "I went into the jaws of sin, but God in His infinite mercy protected me against myself." The consciousness of right followed the moral lapse soon enough to make him leave that 'den of vice.'

I do not claim it a great virtue that a man, who later was to become the undoubted leader of a whole people, should have turned his back on an Indian brothel with its crude wooden staircase leading to a still cruder little room, where on wooden planks a little whore offered her naked body for a paltry sum of a few rupees. No great virtue at all that he withdrew from 'the jaws of sin'. It is rather the general attitude of the man towards this problem of sex, his ultimate conquest of the flesh and the vow of celibacy, which he later took, that is part of the philosophy

of Gandhi. Then one begins to understand the importance he has attached in his story to this brothel incident, which many others would have preferred to omit.

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Time marched on. The standard of moral values changed. It no longer followed that the son of a Dewan could follow in his father's footsteps. Something more than mere commonsense was necessary for success in life. The lower classes had gradually come to the fore in all competitive positions and the father-to-son tradition did not hold good any more. Moreover, Gandhi's father was dead, and with his limited education Gandhi could hardly achieve much in competitive surroundings. India was already producing too many young men who could fill responsible positions to leave room for those who could only rely on family influence. And so in search of a hitherto unexploited field, Gandhi decided to go to London to become a barrister.

Those were the days when an Indian student attracted some attention in the English metropolis. The vision of Empire had come a little nearer to the Smiths and the Browns, but it was sufficiently elusive to keep alive their interest in the stray Indian student on his way to the Inns of Court or the School of Economics.

To send one's son to England at that time was like sending him to Pekin or Moscow. It was an uncommon adventure, which required thought and consideration. The West was to Indian parents still a wild country — wild in spite of its civilization, perhaps because of it. The ways of the West were dangerous, even though its education might have been sober, steady and fully tried. In the West they ate meat and thrived on it. Meat-eating had made them strong and the souls of the meat-eaters remained untortured. To a son of devout Hindu parents, to touch meat would be fatal and after death there would even be damnation. In the West, young men drank and gambled and slept promiscuously with women. In the West, wild orgies went on till after midnight into the early hours of the morning, and men and women spent whole nights in

Bacchic revelry. To that West one could not send one's son for an education without a certain hesitation. For what was the use of an uneducated son if he returned from England with an unclean mind and a soul, which had for ever been assigned to the spirits of evil ?

All these thoughts crossed the minds of the Gandhi elders when they considered the idea of sending Mohandas to study in England. The all-interfering caste machine, whose power was felt to some purpose in the India of that time, found an occasion to express once again that disapproval, with which it greeted all ideas, which were unconventional or unorthodox. Piously they sat in conference to resolve upon this essentially personal matter, on which neither their opinion nor their judgment had been canvassed. But they sat in judgment just the same with their legs crossed, digging in between their toes to help them to think. It was their privilege to discuss the pros and cons of giving their benediction to the contemplated plan of sending the young Gandhi to England.

Caste had spoken and when the committee of elders broke up there was little doubt as to the unanimity of their decision. It was apparent that if Gandhi went to England, it would have to be against the expressed wishes of his community and he would run the risk of being excommunicated from the Modh Banias, the caste to which he belonged.

The opinion of the caste machine did not worry Gandhi. He had already formulated his sense of moral values and the only opinions that mattered to him were those of his mother, who was now his only living par nt, and of his uncle who, after his father's death, was regarded as the head of the family. The absence of any definite objection on their part was tantamount to an approval, though it was conditional on his taking a vow — or to be more precise three vows, and when these were solemnly administered to him, he knew he had got at least his mother's blessings. He had sworn to live a celebate life in England, never to touch drink and never to eat meat.

On an eventful September the fourth, in the company of a Junagadh lawyer and while still in his teens, he left Bombay, and his way lay West. Not much is known of this first voyage, except that it was not the Cliffs of Dover that extended the first English welcome to him, but the less picturesque and somewhat cold arm of Southampton pier. The young man was obsessed with the importance of this first visit to England and he wore for the occasion a white flannel suit. The navvies were a little shaken at the optimism of a dark stranger, who wore summer clothes when autumn leaves were beginning to shed and when the cold north wind had already started to blow. A trifle embarrassed by his attire, he hastened to meet his Indian friend at the pier and in the excitement that followed, Gandhi picked up his friend's top hat and brushed it the wrong way. It was not a very auspicious omen. Later in life he was to ruffle the very hearts of men.

The arrival of Gandhi in a white flannel suit is not entirely without meaning. It is, of course, typical of the Indian student who arrives in England for the first time to be conspicuous by the inappropriateness of his attire, as if the sole purpose of the visit to England is to learn art, literature, commerce and as a recreation to visit the museums. But the wearing of white is understandable. White has always been regarded by Indians as something that is clean, and at the threshold of a new career it was right and fitting to wear a clean garment. There was, therefore, something symbolic about wearing white. It was intended to be a tribute to the solemnity of the occasion.

The month of September in England — especially towards the end of the month — is not very cheerful for the complete stranger. The English people, who in the normal conduct of their lives react so sensitively to the weather, become more aloof at the sight o the autumn approaching, and with the coming of winter there comes over them a gloom, which spreads over the whole countryside. To those who encounter the Anglo-Saxon temperament in this mood of despression, England is a

disappointing adventure and the absence of any warmth of feeling contrasts with those strong ties of affection which exist at home. Gandhi soon felt a longing for home and as he lay awake at nights the memory of his people, his home and his mother haunted him.

The West had turned out as others had warned him it would — cold and feelingless. There was something strangely aloof about the English people. But he was determined to see the experiment through and he knew he could not return to India before he was fully qualified for the Bar. About that he had made up his mind.

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The London in which Gandhi wandered was a jungle of stone. The familiar landmarks were the same as they always are for the Indian student. Vegetarian Restaurants, the Inns of Court, Thomas Cook's, Gower Street and the Indian Hostel, Chancery Lane and the district of E. C. 4.

E. C. 4! Hard-bitten, cold-blooded, journalists wandered in it, moving heartlessly from one human story to another. Briefless barristers whisked round in circles from their Chambers to the Courts of Law and back again, their empty brief-cases tucked stylishly under their arms. Striped trousers shone at the seats and black coats glistened at the elbows. A provincial irksomeness had strayed into the city and it tried to hide a threadbare existence by glorifying it into a tradition. Charing Cross, the Temple, Strand — this outskirt of the city proper, this slight excursion out of the West End, this concentration of all the money-grabbing instincts of the community, this centre of English jurisprudence and international gossip, this collection of antiquated literature which prostrated itself on pavements, this future site for the Babylons of the Empire — Charing Cross, the Temple, Strand, to which the bus tickets of the Indian student were inevitably punched. That was the locality most familiar to Gandhi in his London days.

The vow to abstain from eating meat, which he had taken, made it imperative that he should find sufficient

restaurants, which catered for vegetarians. Those were the days when Indian restaurants were scarce and what there were of the vegetarian variety were, like nudist colonies, sprinkled sparsely over the face of London. Vegetarianism was only a cult and there were not enough eccentric people to make it pay. To dine out was even for the Englishman something rare, for Londoners did not live, as they do now, in the narrow confines of a one-room flat. After the day's work, there was the home and round the family dining table they would gather to dip into the veal-and-ham pie, or to trim the joint that appeared on a silver salver. I suppose some of the Barrets still dined in Wimpole Street and in Park Lane the blinds were drawn over many a sumptuous meal. Only the ghost of Samuel Johnson hung round the chop-houses and the *Cheddar Cheese.* Dining out was nothing more than an intellectual affectation, like the coining of epigrams and the writing of sonnets. To the young Gandhi, who tried to gorge himself on oatmeal porridge in the morning and who went hungry for lunch, a vegetarian restaurant was like the first drop of rain after the drought had parched the fields of corn.

Gandhi's attitude to vegetarianism was only one phase of his experiment with truth. It was one of the early phases. His abstinence from meat-eating had been forced on him and though he would not break his vow, he was not yet a vegetarian by conviction. It was a form of sacrifice, the price he paid for coming to England with his mother's blessings, which were sacred to him. But at the entrance to a restaurant — in Farringdon Street — he noticed a book for sale. It was Salt's *Plea for Vegetarianism.* The conviction he was searching for came from the pages of this book and as he put it down, he knew that 'God had come to his aid.'

This incident, trifling as it may seem, characterises his early days in London. It shows how he regarded the West with a certain respectful adoration. When he went there, it was to emulate the West in its ways of life, and by life, Gandhi then understood merely the outer shell, not

the deep, inner something which was really vital. Clothes, dancing, playing the violin, parting of the hair, the cut of his suits — these were aspects of English life which gripped his early imagination. He was meticulously punctilious about these. He wanted to acquire that polish, which is supposed to characterise the English gentleman.

A great many amongst us cannot even now visualize the great Mahatma on a dance floor, swaying to the languid strains of the waltz, which must have been in vogue at that time. But Gandhi had, like the rest of us, set foot on an English dance-floor. It shows how even the best amongst us have at some stage of our adolescence attempted to ape some of the sophistications of the West. Yet we would never condescend to wear a Japanese kimono or use the chop-sticks that come from China, even though these latter forms of sophistication are Oriental. But such was and still is the destiny of India that we are nearer to London than to Nanking and Tokyo.

It is then that we understand the lament of those like Paul Robeson, who deplore the neglect of the culture of the East, such as is embodied in the teachings of Buddha, and in the thought of Laotze and Confucius. It is then too that we understand why we would do better to dip earlier in life into the teachings of Mohamed, of Zarathustra, of Krishna, of Buddha and all those who made it possible for our ancestors to be priests and kings, when those of the West were dressed in sheep-skin and woad. Sometimes I wish we had more Aryan arrogance. Yet seeing what it has done to Europe, perhaps it is just as well. What arrogance we profess, comes to us more as an afterthought, almost as an apology.

This probably explains Gandhi's late appreciation of Hindu culture. It was only when the West had failed to grip his imagination and to stimulate his senses that he took refuge in the culture of the East. Likewise his zest for the superficialities of the West gradually died down. He gave up the idea of learning to play the violin and to dance the waltz. He gave up French and elocution,

and he even left the English family, with whom he stayed, to take a small room in a cheaper district of London, where he cooked his own meals and lived on a shilling and three pence a day! He walked to save fares. There was a sudden desire in him to cultivate an earnestness of purpose, when he realized that his visit to England was primarily to study the law and not to ape the superficialities of English life.

III

THE MOULDING OF THE MAN

ABOUT THIS TIME, GANDHI FIRST BEGAN TO SHED his outer garments. By that I do not mean that he wore less clothes or that the drive to the loin-cloth stage had begun. On the contrary, his insistence on formal attire was most emphatic in his London days, and he spent several minutes before the mirror to get a correct parting for the hair. But the shroud in which his soul and his whole spirit was wrapped and which enveloped his life and thought, first began to loosen its folds and you saw him moving towards a simplicity of living.

It was in England that he first got a chance of looking at himself, of revising his purpose of life, his ideals and of formulating his plans for the future. There were, in London, no restrictions of caste, no panchayats to regulate his mode of life, no relations whose sense of morals he could offend. He lived in freedom, such as he had never experienced before and such as he knew he would not again experience on his return. Yet the liberties he took with life became less as the opportunities to take them

increased. He no longer desired self-indulgence, once self-indulgence prostrated itself so blatantly before him. It revealed to him how empty the rest of his life would be if there was nothing more in it than violin and dancing lessons, a smattering of French and a polish of the kind, which faded like cheap varnish.

It was also in English surroundings that he first realized how poorly read he was, and though throughout his life there seems to be a paucity of reading, it was in England that he took a few books in hand and when he read them, they made an impression on him which was lasting. Seldom have we known of a man whose early reading has lasted him so long.

There always remained his affection for the Gita, and often he paid a tribute to the Bible. I cannot help feeling that his real appreciation of these was acquired much later, when in his mode of life he reflected the moral of the Indian Iliad and the Christian Gospel. "The Bible", says Somerset Maugham, is an Oriental Book. Its alien imagery has nothing to do with us. Those hyperboles, those luscious metaphors, are foreign to our genius." That was, perhaps, just why it appealed to Gandhi. In that rhythm, that powerful vocabulary, that grandiloquence, that ornamental prose, Gandhi found something Oriental after his heart, even though it was the Orientalism of a Semite people, nearer Baghdad and Jerusalem, rich, baroque, flowery, rather than an Orientalism which was Aryan, philosophical, elusive, almost mystic. The Gita and the Bible, and to some extent Ruskin and Tolstoi have always inspired him. Perhaps they were the means by which Gandhi brought out something that was within him, which later he conveyed to the people of India. It was a power he had not yet discovered. So comes the first introspective phase of his life. The Jain influence over him made him take refuge in asceticism in order to get a true perspective of himself rather than seek an artificial outlet in self-indulgence, which might have devoured his whole being and extinguished his force.

This insight into himself resulted in something more than self-revelation. From his own example, he was better able to understand the deficiency of the Indian mind. He was able to see more clearly the influences that dominated the Indian, who had no liberty of thought and expression in his country and no scope to develop whatever talent may have been latent and native in his people. The English domination was more than the conquest of territory, more than the colonisation of a people. It had been for the Indian a conquest also of the mind. Body and Soul had been surrendered to the will of the conqueror. Body and Soul! Such was the painful result of introspection, and though Gandhi continued to look into the mirror and part his hair carefully each morning, there came that first shade of doubt in his mind, not strong enough to urge him on to open revolution or to any outward act of violence, but enough to make the spirit within him restless and ready for revolt. The time had not come for him to give vent to that inner urge. He was content to regard himself as a member of the British Empire and he felt towards it a duty of obedience and respect. He believed that the things that England stood for were noble and uplifting, even though in its attitude towards India this nobility of purpose had not been reflected. This tie of friendship between Gandhi and the British was cemented by several individual acts of kindness, which meant a great deal to a young man, who had strayed so far from home.

So the years rolled on and when his name figured amongst those called to the Bar from the Inner Temple, he sighed with relief, packed his trunks and quickly returned home. It was the month of June and the height of the monsoon. The stormy home-coming was symbolic of the new life he was to begin. The outer storm was a symbol of the storm within, and as he landed on the shores of India, it was only to hear the crushing news that his mother was dead — the same woman, whom he had been pining to see all through the days in England. It broke his heart to hear she was no more.

Now came the ablution. It was an ablution in more senses than one. There was the ceremonial that followed his mother's death and that which was necessary to expiate the sin of having defied the caste machine. Discretion was the better part of valour, Gandhi found, like many a young Indian, who has returned to India after having planned for himself a new Utopia. The familiar harbour lights of Bombay had brought back to his mind the naked reality that for the rest of his life he would have to bow to the will of his fellow men and be judged by them, until he could attain such power or greatness as would place him above caste and above those, who laid down the rules, which the common herd were to follow.

Gandhi, therefore, adopted an attitude of compromise. It was a compromise with himself. He revolted against the idea of giving way to the dictates of his elders and on the other hand there was commonsense, tact, discretion urging him to respect those on whom depended his very existence, his life, his career. The result was that whatever the provocation the elders offered, Gandhi determined never to retaliate. He adopted an attitude of perfect nonchalance, a studied indifference, which was more effective than any opposition he could offer. He avoided going against their wishes. He preferred to keep perpetually at a distance.

Gandhi knew his limitations. His only claim to distinction was his newly acquired qualification of Barrister-at-Law — a qualification which without briefs could barely keep him in bread and water. It was a case of over-qualification, for he could neither accept the paltry sums that were offered to him, nor was he in a position to command his price. The condition of the Indian Bar was far from healthy, and Gandhi's early struggle at the Bar was somewhat abortive.

At his brother's request and much against his own judgment, he went on one occasion to a European Officer in Rajkot to ask for a favour on his brother's behalf. Gandhi had some slight acquaintance with the man.

But Kathiawar was different from England and the Englishman–east–of–Suez was not the Englishman he had met in England. It was Gandhi's first realization of the power of the Englishman in India, his first experience of the humiliation that his countrymen suffered at the hands of their rulers. But Gandhi had brought it upon himself. He had gone to ask for a favour and courted a rebuff.

His first reaction was to proceed in a court of law against the Englishman for having ejected him bodily from the house. Hot-blooded, young, impatient, and still fresh from England he had imbibed the idea of liberty and justice and freedom and he saw in this treatment he had received a clear case for the law. There was little doubt in his mind as to the verdict of an impartial jury. Only one fact he had overlooked, and it was a significant fact. Those whom he was accusing would be judges in their own case and there was a sacred bond among Englishmen in India to stand by each other no matter what happened. It was the loyalty on which the British Empire was founded. It was the loyalty by which it would stand or fall. Those who broke that faith, on whatever grounds, were forever branded with shame, even as a squealer in a pack of thieves is marked with the blackest cross against his name, or a scar on his face, by those whom he has let down.

Better counsel prevailed, and Gandhi's first lesson was a bitter one. It left a mark on his impressionable mind and his sensitive personality. It was humiliating to be made to pocket the insult after being insulted. What a change after the years of England where people talked of friendship and of the bonds of Empire and of the brotherhood of Man. India still had that depressing atmosphere of servitude, and righteousness never had a square deal. Intrigue and conspiracy had always triumphed. It was a disappointing place for a man with ideals. It was the lie to all that he had heard in England, for India was never intended to be free. The liberty of its subjects would never be respected and the trouble was

that the Indians themselves were content with this state of servility. It was because of all this that he accepted an invitation to go to South Africa to help an Indian firm to fight a case, pending in the South African courts. The monetary side of this offer was the least attractive, but the idea of getting away from the atmosphere of India, which was choking him, appealed to him most. It was better to be an underpaid barrister in an unknown country than to be briefless and humiliated in one's own. He accepted the offer. It was the beginning of a new adventure, a new experience and he faced it in a frock-coat and turban. It was a strange sight — stranger even than the flannel suit at Southampton pier.

The idea underlying this combination of an Indian head–dress with English clothes was typical of the attitude of Gandhi. It showed the importance he still attached to the wearing of English clothes, and lest he should offend the Indians, he adopted a compromise by wearing a turban with his frock-coat. Compromise in politics, in legislation, in education, had made the progress of India so slow. It savoured of that half-way house, which was called Dyarchy and of that 'gradual' development which is mentioned in all Government of India Acts since the days of Edwin Montagu. It is the worst of being a subject nation. One has perpetually to compromise.

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The Indian in South Africa had long been regarded as a 'coolie.' Sometimes he was referred to as 'Sammy' even as negroes are in America. Some Indians tried to distinguish themselves from the 'coolies.' The Mohamedans would call themselves Arabs and the Parsis fell back upon their Persian ancestory. The term 'coolie' stuck to the Indian because of the large number of indentured labourers, who had gone to Natal on an agreement to serve there for a period of years. It was only a variation of the old idea of serfdom, though the treatment given to these labourers was much the same.

The system of Indian indentured labour started because the Zulu refused to do manual labour for the

European colonists, who were established as planters in South Africa. The white man had, therefore, to resort to Indian labour and his appeal to the Indian Government to send out Indian labourers on a contract for a term of years was sympathetically received. It was in 1860 that the first batch of Indian labourers came to the shores of Africa. It was a consignment that 'belonged to' the British Settlers in Natal.

So that it was the Government of India who gave rise to this "state of semi-slavery." (The words are not mine, but that of the historian Sir W. W. Hunter.) It is ironical in view of England's proud boast that it is responsible for the abolition of slavery. To this ill-omened arrival of the Indian in South Africa was to be traced the origin of the term 'coolie'— a term of contempt used for the Indian whatever his class or occupation or his breeding. It explained why even to-day a fifth-rate Englishman walking in the bazaar of any Indian town is hailed as the 'Sahib.'

There were in South Africa also 'freed' Indians. It is an ambiguous term, for this freedom only came when the period of indenture was over. Already the English colonists were trying to perpetuate this system of indenture by levying an exhorbitant tax at the end of the period of contract in order that his inability to pay the tax would make the Indian sign for another period of years. And Indian labour was essential to the English colonist in order to be able to exploit the natural resources of South African soil.

The Zulu had rebelled against the idea of indentured work. He disliked the thought of working all the year round, when he could make enough by working half that time. His needs were simple. His staple food was maize and he was content to live on porridge made of crushed mealies boiled in water. He ate meat whenever he could lay hands on it; he regarded it more as prey which occasionally fell into his hands — like a brace of partridges sent to you by a friend, week-ending with his gun on the moors of Scotland. Even so, unlike the Indian, the

Zulu was a fine specimen of man. Tall, strapping, with his broad shoulders and well-developed body, he stood out far above the Indian 'coolie' who was weak and bent, and stooped. Thick lips, dilated nostrils, his face rugged in form, but strong in expression — a striking physique. Beside him the Indian stood like a dwarf. The Zulu was not just dark of colour. His skin shone with an ebony-black of which he was so proud. His curly hair was in keeping with the grotesqueness of his form. He stood out like a Gothic midst the decadent renaissance of the white colonists.

Such was the Zulu, whom the Englishman first tried to procure for the tilling of the soil. When he failed, he sent for the weaker and more meek Indian. But it gave him the labour he required — a sort of human beast-of-burden, whom he could push and kick and knock about. No wonder the treatment given to Gandhi by the white man was not much different from that which the dumb, uncomplaining 'coolie' received.

IV

THE CAULDRON BOILS

THE FIRST UNPLEASANT INCIDENT IN SOUTH AFRICA occurred at a railway station. Gandhi had bought a first-class ticket, unaware that travelling first-class was a 'status' denied to the Indians. The strong colour prejudice could not tolerate a coloured man travelling in the same compartment with those who were white. There was, one is inclined to believe, fear of contamination.

Sensitive as I am to this one burning problem of humanity, and carried away as I often get, when talking of the colour bar, I prefer, when narrating another man's experience, to quote his version of the incident. This is how Gandhi describes what happened on that occasion:

"The train reached Maritzburg, the capital of Natal, at about 9 p.m. Bedding used to be provided at this station. A railway servant came and asked me if I wanted one. I declined and he went away. But a passenger came next and looked me up and down. He saw that I was a 'coloured' man. This disturbed him. Out he went

and came in again with one or two officials. They all kept quiet, when another official came to me and said, 'Come along, you must go to the van compartment.'

'But I have a first class ticket', I said. 'That doesn't matter', rejoined the other. 'I tell you, you must go to the van compartment.'

'I was permitted to travel in this compartment at Durban, and I insist on going on in it.' 'No, you won't', said the official. 'You must leave this compartment, or else I shall have to call a police constable to push you out.'

'Yes, you may', I replied. 'I refuse to get out voluntarily'. The constable came. He took me by the hand and pushed me out. My luggage was also taken out. I refused to go to the other compartment, and the train steamed away. I went and sat in the waiting-room, keeping my handbag with me, leaving the other luggage where it was. The railway authorities had taken charge of it.'

'It was winter, and winter in the higher regions of South Africa can be severely cold. Maritzburg being at a high altitude, the cold was extremely bitter. My overcoat was in my luggage, but I did not dare to ask for it lest I might be insulted again, so I sat and shivered. There was no light in the room. A passenger came in about midnight and possibly wanted to talk to me. But I was in no mood to talk.'

I began to think of my duty. . . ."

I suppose there will be some, who will doubt the truth of this incident. There is no doubt in my mind, however. Often when I read through passages such as these, there is a burning inside of me, a mad rush of all emotions conquering the region of the brain and obscuring reason. I feel my heart thumping faster, and my breathing become so heavy that I get conscious of something happening to me, till I pull myself together and return to normality with a deep sigh. It is not a sigh of relief, but of resignation at the suspense which is unending — waiting for a day which has yet to come. How long, O God, how long!

From now the cauldron boils. This first bitter experience left a taste in Gandhi's mouth. It shattered the world of make-believe in which he had taken refuge, believing that he was a free and equal member in a great empire and that the British Commonwealth of Nations was an ideal, if not a fact to which he could honourably aspire. He began to think how he could redress the wrongs which the white man had done to his darker brother. Yet it was not a plan of revenge that he was working out in his mind. He was trying to find a way to conquer the world with love, for he was an idealist who was not always very practical. A tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye did not appeal to him as much as the turning of the other cheek and that is why his more "passive" philosophy has taken so long to shape. He took the teachings of Christianity more seriously than did the Christians. To him the story of Christ was a timeless story and not one which had its setting solely amidst the decadence of the Roman Empire and in the lust of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Others in his place would have preferred to wreak their vengeance on the flesh, to kill and destroy. Instead Gandhi carried, what he regarded as the black man's burden — to save the soul of his white brother! It required patience and an infinite capacity for sacrifice. Gandhi had that patience. He was also capable of making great sacrifices. He still had some faith in humanity. He would not give up merely because he had been insulted. Some day, he thought, man would find himself. Humanity, shorn of its cloak of caste, creed, colour, religion, would discover a common level, where man could meet man on a basis of equality. His impressionable mind was yet too full of the things he had read in Ruskin and Tolstoi, too full of the kindness of individuals, whom he had encountered in England. And he would not give up so early in life that faith he once had in the British and their Empire. Perhaps it was because he realized the import of his contact with ideas which had come to him only through the West. Perhaps it was

because his earlier adoration of the white man still clung on to him and even though he could never become the genuine article, the imitation of it was to him somewhat of an achievement. On one recorded occasion he behaved in a manner which would justify this latter explanation. It was when he wrote to a station master in the Transvaal asking to be allowed to travel first-class and asked for a reply in person at the station, because as he put it: ". . . . If the station master gave a written reply, he would certainly say 'No', especially because he would have his own notion of a 'coolie' barrister. I would, therefore, appear before him in faultless English dress and talk to him and possibly persuade him to issue a first-class ticket. So I went to the station in a frock-coat and necktie, placed a sovereign on the counter for my fare and asked for a first-class ticket."

It is difficult to believe that this man, who later was to become the Mahatma Gandhi, could ever have reasoned like that and were it not that I have faith in Mr. C. F. Andrews' interpretation of Gandhi's own story, I would have doubted the authenticity of this incident. The station master's reply is even more significant. "I see you are a gentleman," he said.

It reflects little to the credit of the justice of this world that a world figure should have stood at the bar of justice erected at a railway station, with an ordinary station master as sole judge, to have the verdict of being a gentleman passed on him because of his frock-coat and necktie. There is something bitterly humiliating, something low and demeaning, something shameful, degrading, almost immoral about this episode that shakes my faith in man, my faith even in my God. There is no Nemesis except that which fulfills itself. Better to live only in the flesh and decay with it—with no mind, no heart, no soul.

Gandhi would never utter such a sentiment. The flesh was the weakness of man. He had found it a hindrance in his attempt to uplift the soul. The flesh must first be curbed, for only when removed from earthly things could he look into his own self and prepare himself

for the great spiritual ordeal that was to come. In this process of introspection, Christianity was to play a considerable part — yet not all of Christianity, for the he drew upon it only in so far as it coincided with his own philosophy of life and his own individual religion. It was the Sermon on the Mount that appealed to him most. In it he saw self-mastery, self-denial, self-surrender. It was after his own ideal. But unlike the Christians he did not believe that the goal of life should be redemption from the consequences of sin. He did not want to worship the Crucifix as the Christians did in order to redeem themselves from sin. He sought rather to be redeemed from sin itself. Intellectually, therefore, Gandhi was not convinced by the fundamental theories of Christianity as preached by the Christians. But the atmosphere of Christianity always calmed his restless soul.

There is in the ceremonial of the Christian Church a dignity which one misses in the Hindu Temple, the Parsee Atash Behram or the Mohamedan Mosque. There is something rich in the cadence of the hymns and the psalms, something poetic in the prose of the Testament, something peaceful in those moments of silent prayer, all on bended knees, their hands clasped, their heads bowed — something detached in that Gothic architecture with its stained windows and its wooden apostles. This atmosphere of the Christian Church appealed to him. You could see him listening with awe to a full choir singing the Ave Maria of Gounod, accompanied by the soft music of Bach. It was powerful, almost breath-taking and it suited his Oriental temperament. It was in keeping with a mood in which he has often found himself. Time and again in later years at the close of prayers in his Ashram at Sabarmati, he has asked his Christian friend, C. F. Andrews to sing his favourite hymn–"*Lead, kindly light, amidst the encircling gloom.*" I am sure it was because of the atmosphere it created for him.

Gandhi drew a distinction between Christianity as understood and practised in the West and his own interpretation of it. The place he gave to Christ in his heart

was that of a mighty teacher, nothing more. He accepted Christ as a martyr, as a symbol of supreme sacrifice to which he himself aspired. But the idea that Christ was the Incarnate Son of God was to Gandhi philosophically unsound and to his Hindu mind it was no better than a superstition. If it was only the Sermon on the Mount that Christianity stood for, he would have enlisted as a Christian. But "much of that which passes for Christianity was a negation of the Sermon on the Mount."

With this deep-rooted faith in his own interpretation of Christianity and the part which love played in it, he firmly believed that the Christian would one day come to hear again of the Gospel of Christ. Meanwhile, he was prepared to suffer the humiliation that was offered to him. He wanted to fling not mud, but the teachings of the Saviour, into the faces of those who were born Christians and who thought they were nearer to their God than the men who were born "heathens."

It was a difficult task that Gandhi had set out to perform, for the hatred of the dark skin was firmly ingrained in the white man's soul. It passed down through the generations from father to son. It was a hereditary hatred, which could only be cured by the sterilisation of the species. That is, perhaps, the only real solution to the colour problem, the only way to eradicate from its roots the colour bar.

Meanwhile insult added to insult and humiliations piled up in that outpost of the Empire. Episode stacked up on episode to form a sort of pyre. There was the incident on the coach from Charlestown, where he was made to sit outside — beaten, when he refused to place himself at the coachman's feet, clinging on desperately while blows were aimed at his frail, weak body. There was the incident outside President Kruger's house, when the patrol on duty pushed and kicked him into the street because he happened to be walking on the same footpath as the soldier on duty. Yet he bore it all without a murmur, for he had made it a rule of his life never to ask for redress. The justice that Gandhi sought was not to

be found in the courts of law. It went beyond the courts. One day he knew it would come and it was a waste of time to plead for it now. He had moved far since the day he wanted to prosecute the Englishman at whose hands he had been thrown out in Rajkot.

Yet justice was not to come of its own accord. The days were over when manna used to fall from the heavens. The meek would never inherit the earth. They must be made strong and those, who had been trodden upon, must stand up once again. Together they could help each other. Together they could make their force felt. Together the oppressed of this world could give their oppressors something to think about. Gandhi realised this early in life and he made his first public speech at the meeting in Pretoria with a view to unite the oppressed of South Africa. His voice had cried out only in the wilderness, but even so he had achieved something, for he became conscious of the power within him to shape the lives of other men. It was the flowering of Gandhi the leader.

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One must estimate the importance of the Englishman of that time. The white man was then on the top of the world, and the Empire stood for something that was almighty and supreme. It was a great thing to be a white member of the British Empire. It was a greater thing to know that the darker races, which had been conquered and incorporated into the Empire, lay grovelling at the white man's feet. No one questioned his superiority, and those who did, were crushed and trampled upon like obnoxious vermin, which had no right to appear on the face of this earth.

Circumstances had made it possible for the Englishman to retain his alleged superiority. No opposition was offered nor was it forthcoming. No toleration was extended to those who doubted the power and supremacy of the white man, who had planted his flag on the black soil of Africa and India. The have-nots of England had migrated to the outposts of the Empire to become the

haves of India and Africa, and the class barrier, which they had found erected against them in their own country, they now transplanted on "native" soil. Only this time they put the coloured man on the other side, so that at least in the colonies they could feel they were top-dogs — a feeling which was denied to them at home.

This early contact with the white man in South Africa was responsible for the making of Gandhi the rebel. It gave him an insight into the mind of his ruler, and a first-hand knowledge of the type of mentality that shaped the destiny of India, a mentality which he would have to combat in his later struggle for the liberation of the Indian people. He realized that the individuals he encountered were not worthy of the respect he felt for the Empire. Yet, he was inclined to distingush those, who were individuals, from the conception of Empire, which he idolized. He had not given up his ideal of conquering the world by a soul-force, which he was trying to acquire.

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Four years passed, and the Boer War broke out. It was one of those major disturbances which made Empire history. Someone had at last questioned the power and the might of England. Someone foolish had come forward as a target for England's imperial might. The line on the Empire chart had so long shown an upward curve. Now England's possession was endangered and the Indians of South Africa had to decide whether they should take part in this war between Britain and the Boers. In spite of the treatment they had received at the hands of Englishmen, the Indians felt that they were after all British subjects and it was as such that they had set foot on South African soil. Gandhi was the first to realize the significance of this common bond of nationality. He had a queer sense of loyalty towards his rulers. Moreover, he wanted to prove to the Englishman that the Indians could rise to the occasion in the hour of England's need.

He gathered his community around him and gave expression to his convictions. He explained the position

of the Indian without British nationality. He spoke of this opportunity to prove to the Englishman the real worth of the Indian. He spoke of such things as "allegiance" and "loyalty" and the "duty" that lay on them as subjects of the Empire. He spoke of character and self-sacrifice and when his argument commended itself to his countrymen, he communicated his intention of helping the English by forming an Ambulance Corps. He wanted to show that if the Indians were not allowed to take active part in the war, they could at least attend to the needs of the wounded. This gesture gave rise to much sentimentality. There was the conferring of medals on the Indians and the melting of English hearts. It was all too touching for words. Watching those Indians work, one would hardly have believed that they had any grievances against the white man, or any complaints about the inferiority of their status.

The Boer War came and went. The Indians came out of it with a handful of silver medals. So also came the Black Plague and the Zulu Rebellion. "A genuine sense of loyalty", says Gandhi, "prevented me from wishing ill to the Empire." That was representative of his feelings at that time. It was much later that he summed up, in one single sentence in his autobiography, his eventual disillusionment. No single line has ever expressed so forcibly that change that has come over the Indian in his attitude to the British Empire. In that sentence Gandhi says: "But then I believed that the British Empire existed for the welfare of the World."

There is something very bitter in those two words—*But then.* They express, as nothing else in his writing has done, that disappointment within him, that first realization of his misplaced trust in the British raj, that shaking of his faith in the Empire. Couched in his inimitable simple style, it is in its way a most bitter condemnation, when you bear in mind the enthusiasm and the respect he once had for that same Empire. He exploded once and for all the theory of loyalty and allegiance and duty, that we as a nation are supposed to owe to our

rulers. Yet with all this, Gandhi has been the restraining influence on Indian nationalism Were it not for Gandhi this country of ours would have made its bid for power with all the violence at its command — perhaps to be soaked in blood and littered with corpses and to return to slavery once more, perhaps to win through and later fumble to assert itself in the chaos that would inevitably have followed. Be that as it may, he threw in his lot with the British at the time of the Boer War and the Zulu Rebellion against a people who had done the Indians no harm. It was for the sake of loyalty ! It was a high price to pay for loyalty, and he emerged from the rebellion with the rank of a Sergeant-Major !

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Meanwhile in 1904 he had already launched a paper which he called *Indian Opinion.* It reflects, as *Young India* and *Navajivan* did later, a phase of Gandhi's life. It shows the growth of the Satyagraha movement as it centred round the Indians of South Africa. Originally the paper was issued from Durban. Later, when he read *Unto This Last,* Gandhi moved it to a farm on a hill thirteen miles from Durban. He called it "The Phoenix Farm." Perhaps, because it was to rise on its own ashes.

Indian Opinion became the authoritative exposition of his philosophy of life — social, political, economic. It was not merely the record of the struggle of an individual, but also of the wider national struggle that centred round him. It gave him an opportunity to think if only because he had to convey his thoughts to his fellowmen through the columns of his newly formed paper.

While marching during the rebellion along the dusty stretch that led to the front, he first realized how important self-purification was, if he was to live in the spirit and not in flesh. He began to understand the difference of purpose between the brute and man — a difference which did not exhibit itself in ordinary life to the extent to which it should. The Boer War had brought to his mind the horrors of war. The Zulu Rebellion emphasized this more clearly. It was the way of all flesh

to bring about its own downfall. We call it lust. It made Gandhi think of something, which went beyond earthly desire, which would create and not destroy, and it occurred to him then that this force, which he was trying to acquire, would only come to him when he practised continence and observed chastity.

This idea of continence he found more definitely expressed in the word 'Brahmacharya.' It was the only life worth leading. It implied the mastery of thought over the flesh, the complete surrender of the self to the absolute, until the self became one with the Supreme Being. Truth then began to appear in a different light and every day the body receded more and more into the background as the soul became something real and lifelike. It was in fact life itself — the only life. The body was merely the outer shell — the garment — the visible, tangible cover. It was the crystallization of the soul that would bring him nearer to the truth he was striving after. 'Brahmacharya' implied self-denial in its most drastic form. It was *asceticism in excelsis*. Its ordinary prosaic meaning was 'Celibacy,' but as understood by Gandhi it implied control of all impulse and urge that came from the flesh. It implied the complete abnegation of the sex-urge; it insisted on a control of diet, a surrender of all sensuousness as of all sensuality. The star of Venus would have to fall from its place in the heavens. The light in someone's eyes would have to be dimmed for ever. To see, to feel, to think in terms of the flesh was denied to those, who took this solemn and irrevocable vow of abstinence. It meant leaving the world behind to live a life apart from it, a life that admitted of no deflection from the path of absolute truth. Yet it was not death but life that Brahmacharya implied.

As soon as the Zulu rebellion was over, Gandhi discussed this idea of taking the vow of celibacy with his friends. Their response was encouraging, though they were a little hesitant of taking a vow which had such far-reaching consequences. There was no half-way-house to 'Brahmacharya.' It was either a complete abnegation

of all the urges of the flesh or nothing at all. He knew the implication of the vow he was to take. He was only unaware of the difficulties, which would later arise. For 'Brahmacharya' was not mere physical restraint. That was only an elementary aspect of it. Complete 'Brahmacharya' implied the cultivation of a mental attitude, which would preclude even an impure thought. It was not enough that man should deny himself the pleasures of the world, if such denial gave rise to a desire which was more acute. It was to obliterate even the desire that this vow of celibacy was taken. It was a double purification — that of the body and of the mind. It was an essential preliminary to the satyagraha for which he was preparing and one saw how his politics would henceforth be influenced by his philosophy. The year 1916 saw him take the final plunge to vow to lead a celibate life. It had taken him six years to achieve that strength of character to take this first step towards attaining mastery over the body.

One of the ways of attaining 'Brahmacharya' was by diet-control. We eat far more than we need, and this excessive diet coupled with an indulgence in pulses and spices is not without its physical reaction. "Passion in man is generally coupled with the hankering after the pleasures of the palate." With the taking of the vow, the pleasures of the palate had to be sacrificed. Not content with being a vegetarian, he even gave up that part of his food, which was not absolutely essential for the bare needs of his existence. Salt he denied himself. Even milk he refused to take. And so came into existence 'Brahmacharya' as part of his design for living.

The average man thought there was something mad about the way in which he lived. But there was reason in his madness. In the new life he had planned, he could see vast possibilities of serving humanity. His attachment to the world would otherwise have stood in his way. So he gave up sharing a bed with his wife or enjoying any privacy with her. Lust, he determined, should no longer play any part in his marital relations. His idea of marriage

would have to take a different shape from that moment onwards. He saw now more clearly that there was a force in man that had its origin in the soul, and if it was rid of the hindrance, which the flesh constantly put in its way, it would unfold infinite possibilities to conquer this world.

Soul force was the real power which moved this world. It was the cause of the evolution of the species, the *elan-vital* of which Bergson spoke. It was active, positive, life-like. It was the basis of the satyagraha, which Gandhi first evolved in South Africa and later perfected in India. It was different from the idea of passive resistance such as was understood in the West. Satyagraha, therefore, was a new word for an old force. It was to be found in the teachings of Christ. It was influenced by the thought of Tolstoi and Thoreau. Gandhi's merit lay in that he translated the teachings of Christ and the ideas of Tolstoi and Thoreau into actual practice. He demonstrated that it was really possible to fight for liberty without resorting to violence. He made the French and the Russian revolutions look small and somewhat pointless in spite of the liberty they brought to their people.

Satyagraha is derived from 'Satya' which means truth and 'Agraha', which connotes insistent pursuit. I prefer to call it 'a flaming desire for truth.' This freer translation conveys more accurately the real meaning of satyagraha. But satyagraha must be more clearly defined. There is a great deal of confusion about words like 'satyagraha', 'non-violence' and 'passive resistance.' We are inclined to use all three indiscriminately without trying to differentiate between them. Satyagraha, as understood by Gandhi, is not a passive but an active resistance, which depends for its force not upon violence but on love, faith and sacrifice. Satyagraha is non-violent, but it is not *passive* resistance. Often it has been confused with passive resistance, which implies surrender, because this world cannot conceive of a resistance, which is active and at the same time non-violent. This concep-

tion is based on the fallacy that those who do not return force by force are not resisting. Satyagraha has led to the discovery of this fallacy. Yet let no one make the mistake that satyagraha was the last refuge of a coward, for as between cowardice and violence in Gandhian philosophy, it was violence that had preference. "I would risk violence a thousand times rather than emasculation of the race," Gandhi says, "but I believe that non-violence is infinitely superior to violence, forgiveness more manly than punishment...abstinence is forgiveness only when there is power to punish; it is meaningless when it pretends to proceed from a helpless creature." Satyagraha, therefore, is not quiet suffering. It is conscious and deliberate suffering, brought upon oneself of one's own free will and choice and with the consciousness of its strength and power. And when Gandhi speaks of strength and power it is not measured in terms of armies and navies and air forces and all such physical manifestations of strength. The soul of a nation can perish in spite of a million armed men. But it is when the soul is indomitable and cannot be crushed by all the physical force that is brought to bear upon it, that you have the true test of a man, nation, and even of the world. For man is distinguished from the brute by his soul, and Satyagraha, therefore, is the active, non-violent resistance of his soul. And that Satyagraha should be the basis of his philosophy of life, of his politics and of his religion occurred to Gandhi in his early South African days, when he saw the brute force of man exhibit itself so blatantly in the Boer war and the Zulu rebellion. The ghastly spectacle of innocent men and women being blown up into little bits of raw flesh, that were strewn over that very same earth, of which they were born, was enough to convince him that in non-violence would be found the only solution to the problems of this world. Only that way would lasting peace come to man.

Non-violence had its roots in Hindu religion. It was known as Ahimsa. The Jains had interpreted it from one particular angle. It was to be found in their refusal to

take life in any form. But as such it had only a negative aspect. Out of it Gandhi evolved a technique which formed the basis of his Satyagraha. So that Satyagraha is the application of the doctrine of non-violence.

This doctrine of *Ahimsa*, which Gandhi has called 'the rule and the breath of his life,' is difficult to reconcile with all that he has said and done. His recruitment of volunteers for the Great War, his desire to destroy the monkeys, which were a nuisance in his Ashram, his willingness to end the suffering of a calf that was in pain by killing it, are inconsistent with that ideal standpoint which he has so often taken. He has said in defence of himself that non–violence must adapt itself to individual requirements. But if that were true, it would be exempting civilisation from the crime of slaughtering the million living that now lie cold on the fields of Flanders. It would even justify the *lathi* charges that have been directed on harmless crowds in the name of law and order. It would help to defend the Dyer incident, Jallianawalla Baug and the Crawling Order, and Gandhi would not like to let non-violence adapt itself so freely. This is, therefore, one of the fundamental points on which it is difficult to reconcile all that Gandhi has said with what he has done. Rightly has he said; "Non-violence works in a most mysterious way." But this seeming inconsistency is only from the ideal standpoint, which aims at being so logical that it neglects the element of human nature from all its calculations and which attempts to reduce *Ahimsa* to a mathematical science. It does not in any way diminish the power and might of the movement, which is based on it, and which has been used to great effect in circumstances in which others would have resorted to violence and force. For even from the point of view of practical politics, satyagraha has been the greatest weapon in the hands of a non-violent peace-loving nation against whom the force of might has been tried. This satyagraha, therefore, which had its germ in the Jain idea of *Ahimsa*, was later to give India its partial freedom and to bring

a powerful imperialist power to respect a nation, whose limbs it could tear asunder, but whose soul it could never crush.

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One of the early influences in Gandhi's life was Ruskin's *Unto This Last*. He read this book on a railway journey. When he laid it down he learnt something which he had never known before. It was the importance of living a life of labour, and by labour was meant manual labour — as the tiller of the soil, or as a handicraftsman. Gandhi acted on the new lesson he had learnt. He rallied the men of *Indian Opinion* around him and when he had convinced them of his faith in the teaching of Ruskin, he arranged to transplant the whole press to that farm in Phoenix, on which the labourers could live and work as for an ideal rather than for monetary gain.

The early struggle at Phoenix provides a fascinating study for anyone, who wishes to follow the ascetic strain in Gandhi. It was a sort of back-to-God and back-to-nature idea that found expression in a back-to-the-soil movement. The difficulties that faced this gallant band of workers, who were struggling desperately to bring out their first edition of *Indian Opinion* on time, were a test of their courage and their faith. Man-power had to be resorted to when the machine suddenly stopped functioning at the eleventh hour. All night they worked — the carpenters, the handicraftsmen, the whole colony that had taken the plunge with Gandhi and landed on the farm at Phoenix. Dawn arrived and with it their efforts were rewarded. By some miracle the machine began to work again, as if it had rested during the night. No one could give a satisfactory explanation for this turn of fate. It only helped to cement their faith in their leader and in his judgment. Phoenix is, therefore, important as an example of his experiments with truth.

It was experience like this that made him feel that God was preparing him for a greater struggle. He felt the strength of faith. He saw a vision of the future, when his courage and his power of leadership would be more

severely tested. There was no doubt that here was a man whose personality drew other men towards him. The bitter humiliation he had experienced would mellow when success came to him. The odds were overwhelmingly against him, and yet he knew that in some higher court of justice he would one day plead the cause of millions of dark, oppressed people and that justice would at last fulfil its purpose. To that day he dedicated himself, his life, his whole career.

In the meantime, something happened to prove the worth of his purification of the self. He felt that some superior force was urging him to greater things. The hymn of Newman echoed in his ears. "Lead Thou me on," he kept repeating to himself, and he believed that God had heard his prayer. The Transvaal Government announced in a Gazette Extraordinary that there would be compulsory registration for Indians in South Africa. As Glorney Boulton put it: "The Indian was to receive the treatment accorded in England to a convict released on licence." To consider this iniquitous legislation, the Indians met in an old theatre in Johannesburg, and that night, when an old Mohamedan swore 'by God' that he would never submit to the ordinance, Gandhi took the lead and brought the Satyagraha oath into existence. A great deal of significance was attached to an oath taken in the name of God. It was different from other abstract resolutions, which had not the same binding force as an oath in the name of God — a distinction, which reflected the psychology of the Indian mind. With the declaration to the effect that they would resist the "Black" Act, Gandhi took the matter up with Lord Elgin, then at the Colonial Office. He was successful in so far as Elgin disallowed the Act. But the Transvaal was soon to receive responsible government and they could then bring the Act into existence on their own initiative, and Elgin added, it would then receive the Royal assent. A few months later when the new Parliament was elected in the Transvaal, it passed at a

single sitting the "Black" Ordinance, which was to come into effect within a few months.

The eventful day was July 1st, and the first satyagraha movement was launched. Picketing began outside the permit offices, and so successful was the disobedience campaign that only five hundred out of thirteen thousand Indians registered. Perplexed at this new resistance that was offered to them, the government made a symbolic arrest of an insignificant individual. He was given a cell in the European ward and extended all facilities. Yet when he was released he became almost a martyr, and the government soon realized that his arrest was a mistake and they now set about to get at the real leaders. They felt that they were being forced to act, and more arrests were made. Orders were given to those convicted to leave the Transvaal by a specific date. This was an ideal state of affairs for the satyagrahis. It opened up more possibilities of disobedience. The order was defied and arrests had again to be made and sentences of imprisonment were passed on Gandhi and others. It was Gandhi's first experience of prison, which he had so often courted.

His Majesty's prisons were at that time not the caravansaries, which they later became, when in India the great leaders of the Congress rested there between one non-co-operation movement and another. Prison was a sordid detail in a man's life and martyrdom had not yet been associated with it. On the contrary it stood for something that was low and depraved. Those who entered the stone walls never could hold up their heads again. There was a moral branding from which no inmate, however innocent, could escape. It was a degradation of the self, if only because of the atmosphere with which the prisoner had come into contact. The time was still far away when people flocked to gaols to uphold a mere principle. That mental attitude towards prison had not yet been adopted. It was to be a life of suffering and hardship for Gandhi. Yet he bore it with patience, because capacity to suffer was a true test of his creed of satyagraha. What a farce it would have become if the chief apostle of satyagraha

lost faith in his creed. At the same time, his eyes were opened to the realities of prison life. He had spoken of courting gaol with so much bravado but now he knew what he was to expect when he defied the law.

It was not a pleasant prospect to share a cell with some of the worst inmates that the prison could boast of. It was nauseating to have to watch these fallen specimens of humanity slaking their lust in the filth of each other's bodies. It was frightening to live amidst those, who were condemned for the most hideous crimes and who still had murder in their eyes. Yet now that he was there, this infliction, which he had brought upon himself, was preferable to the ignominy of a surrender. And General Smuts and his government were just waiting for Gandhi to surrender. It soon became apparent to those in office that the Indians meant what they said, when they swore to disobey the 'Black' Act. It was not just a form of bravado that would die down if firmly handled. It was more serious than that, and the government thought it advisable to negotiate for terms.

Satyagraha had fulfilled itself. The dress-rehersal, complete with the imprisonment scene, had been successfully staged, and all that now remained for the actors was to take their bow on the opening night.

As a result of the settlement, Gandhi became a free man, but General Smuts secured an assurance from him that he would register voluntarily and urge others to follow his example. Gandhi promised. Those, who followed him, were a little sceptical about the honesty of purpose of their leader. Had he, they asked, been bought over so cheaply and so soon ? The tide of popularity turned and Gandhi found himself the victim of a cruel attack on his person. But nothing could make him flinch from his promise to the General. From his sick bed, he signed his name and gave his thumb impression to the authorities and kept his part of the bargain in that 'Gentleman's agreement.' The registration officers sat back and laughed at the thumb prints, which had piled up before them. Voluntarily given!

The "Black" Act still remained in force. Trickery, crudely so called, had triumphed over truth and honesty, while battered and broken Gandhi lay in the home of an English missionary, Joseph Doke, having made himself the laughing stock of those, who had carefully planned this idea of getting the signatures and thumb impressions on false pretences. Now they announced that the "Black Act" was to remain in the blue books for yet a while.

It has been said that you can do almost anything with a bayonet except sit on it. The South African government had not realized that. To sit back on those certificates, obtained by fraud and deception, was not so easy. A certificate of identification was useless unless the Indian carried it on himself. The last trump was, therefore, still in Indian hands. Under the peaceful shadow of a mosque in Johannesburg, the Indians met again. This time they were resolute in their purpose, firmer in their course of action, and slightly more spectacular. A real cauldron boiled in their midst, passions were inflamed and in the melting pot, which was only glowing with the embers, the certificates of registration fell one by one, till they lit up in one blazing fire — cauldron, embers, passion and all. The government once more had to come to terms with Indian opinion in South Africa. And the struggle in South Africa ended. Gandhi had learnt some very important lessons. When he came to South Africa it was only as a briefless barrister. Now he was the acknowledged leader of twenty thousand Indians, with whom he had experimented in his search for truth.

During these days of the Satyagraha movement, some arrangement had to be made in order to provide for the wives and children of the men, who were serving their term of imprisonment. It was difficult to give individual financial help to all of them, nor was it possible for these families to exist when the breadwinner was behind bars. To remedy this, Gandhi collected the various families on a farm, named by him after Tolstoi. The idea underlying Tolstoi farm, which was well over a thousand acres, was not merely to provide a sanctuary for those, who were tempo-

rarily homeless. He wanted to teach his flock discipline, necessary for the progress of a movement such as he was planning. He wanted them to think and feel and live as he himself did. The lesson of his life would come nearer to them if they saw him live it from day to day. That was the purpose behind this farm on which a thousand trees grew, and where nature had run wild and bountiful. Midst these surroundings, the weak became strong and labour became a sort of tonic to those, who had shunned it before. Tolstoi farm was a success. It was in its way the predecessor of the Ashram which he was later to found in India.

Yet all this was merely the early experiment. South Africa was never more than the background of Gandhi's life — the forging house of his philosophy of life. What happened in South Africa is only important because of what followed in India. To lead and to guide twenty thousand Indians can hardly be regarded as establishing a claim to world recognition. To lead three hundred and seventy millions is a very different affair.

V

A PAUSE FOR WILLINGDON

THE SCENE SHIFTS. THE INDIAN PATRIOT, GOKHALE who had helped Gandhi with his advice, and who was responsible for drawing India's attention to the happenings in South Africa, had gone to England and had sent word to Gandhi to join him there. So Gandhi sailed for Europe to find, as he entered the English Channel, that war had broken out in Europe and that England was embroiled in a first class major encounter, from which it could not possibly extract itself till the bitter end. On August 6th, he landed at Southampton. It was two days after Sir Edward Gray had broken the important news to the English people that England would stand by her word, plighted to Belgium by a treaty, which guaranteed its neutrality. The sudden happenings of August 1914 upset the plans of Gokhale and Gandhi.

Gandhi, who was now recognised as a "leader" among Indians, could not look upon the outbreak of the War with indifference, when it was certain that his own countrymen would be called upon to help the "Mother" country in the

hour of its greatest need. Gandhi's contribution to the War, it must be said at the outset, was negligible. The formation of a volunteer corps and recruitment for it, was a very minor achievement, when you bear in mind the contribution of other individuals to that same world war. As you pass through London and Paris today, you cannot help paying a silent tribute to the Cenotaph in Whitehall, or the Arc de Triomphe with its eternal flame burning over the tomb of the unknown soldier. Then you begin to measure sacrifice in terms of the millions dead. In comparison to all this, we cannot seriously speak of Gandhi's contribution to the war. Materially it was a minute contribution. The volunteer corps which he organised and recruited was to be counted only in the hundreds. Nor could Gandhi be allowed to take the credit or blame of throwing a million Indian troops into the vortex of that bloody war. For that he was not responsible. It was rather his mental attitude towards the war, that was so astonishing in view of his former struggle against the white oppression in South Africa. There was also his deep-rooted conviction against the taking of human life, his belief in *Ahimsa*, his Jain philosophy, against which he went to do his best and to give his moral support to an Empire, which he believed was fighting for democracy, for the freedom of humanity, for honour and self-respect — all those things, which made an immediate appeal to the heart of man. There were so many other attitudes he could have adopted. He could have joined the ranks of conscientious objectors. He could have refrained from recruiting Indians on the ground that it was another man's war. He could have caused deadlocks to add to England's embarrassment at that time. He could have taken advantage of England's position to brew trouble in India so that when England's energy was at its lowest, he could proceed with the struggle for India's freedom and the odds would have been greatly in his favour. One must view these possibilities in order to appreciate the character of the man. One must also consider the power of forgiveness in a man who

went to help that same Empire, which had so bitterly humiliated him, and appreciate the irony and the humour of his receiving the Kaiser-I-Hind medal for his humane work during the War, at the hands of a government who were later to send him to several long terms of imprisonment. It gives us an idea of that immense faith which Gandhi still had in the Empire, and enables us to appreciate the force of his later non-co-operation movements. It is only as a psychological study that his attitude in the great War is important, for towards the end of that same year, he was taken ill and, when pleurisy set in, he was advised to return to a warmer climate and he came back to India. On his arrival Gokhale, who had returned before him, brought him a message that the Governor of Bombay, Lord Willingdon, would like to meet him.

I pause for a moment to view the living incarnation of British rule, embodied in the noble Marquis of Willingdon, then a very ordinary peer of the realm. A long face, chiselled features, a large forehead, well-groomed, tall, strapping. Always immaculately turned out, whether in uniform or mufti, whether in Jodhpurs ready for an afternoon's polo or in his old-fashioned frock-coat and grey topper driving in state to attend the big meeting of the Turf Club.

Lord Willingdon was a great showman. He belonged to that school of diplomacy, which believed that the British rule in India centred as much round that galaxy of sepoys who decked themselves out in red and gold outside Government House as on the edicts and ordinances that periodically emerged from the headquarters of the Government. He was a Tory by blood and in politics. He was a class-conscious, self-conscious, blue-blooded squire, who had emerged from the seclusion of his mansion house to save his class from the onslaught of socialism and the bourgeoisie. He was picked out early in life as a staunch defender of the vested interests of the British ruling classes. Willingdon had gripped the imagination of the Indian early in his tenure of office. He knew the Indian's failing for pomp and show and he took an almost patro-

nising interest in the affairs of India. He had a flair for doing the sort of things, which appealed to that stagnant Indian mind, which was steeped in the hero-worship of the Englishman. He would leave Government House open for inspection during the months he went to the hills and the queue, that filed past his dressing-room, would look with awe upon the pairs of shoes which stood there, brilliantly polished, perfectly dusted, bright and shining — a tribute to its wearer and to the polish that characterized everything connected with his name.

He had the ideal partner in his wife. Like him she was well-bred and came from the best of the English landed gentry. The stock she came from was alpha-double-plus. They made the perfect pair for holding the position of being the first gentleman and lady of the province, over which they were sent to rule. They had not been long in India when Indian society knew that mauve was her ladyship's favourite colour and that a brown and white shoe appealed to the noble lord. Clubs, societies, hospitals, playgrounds, institutions, roads were named after them. "Willingdon" was the hall-mark of friendship between the ruling classes of England and the 'haves' of India. Titled Indian gentlemen were proud to show the portrait of Their Excellencies, which had been given to them. On it, with a flourish, sprawled the signature of the Willingdons. Carefully framed in silver, it would stand prominently in their drawing-rooms, on some carved Cashmere walnut-wood table, on which nothing else dared to stand. On such terms of endearment were the lords of England with the knights of Bombay.

Lady Willingdon liked the homage, which rich Indians paid to her. She liked it when glamorous Oriental women, decked in jewels worth thousands of pounds, curtsied low as they entered the inner precincts of Government House. She liked it too when Indian princes, sovereigns in name, bowed to her. It flattered her vanity. Perhaps it was because of her influence that throughout their regime — in Bombay, in Madras, and in Delhi as Viceroy — her husband did not alter in his

attitude towards the Indians — a masked pose of friendliness. For in the history of the British rule in India, Lady Willingdon must be reckoned as an influence not to be overlooked. The A.D.C's of her regime have clicked more heels and stood more rigidly to attention than at any other time. Sometimes one wondered how different was this exhibition of the power of the raj from reality.

To such a Government House, Gandhi went "to be received" by His Excellency. That was the correct term. Or was he "received in audience" ? One might just as well have made a record of one's voice and sent it to His Excellency. So formal were these visits of Indians to Government House. Gandhi was an interesting stranger. The Government were aware of his activities in South Africa. He was a person who had to be carefully watched. But curiosity prevailed upon Lord Willingdon and he wanted to see for himself what sort of an Indian this was, who had created so many obstacles for the white man in South Africa, and had questioned the undoubted might of the British rule.

A shrewd diplomat, well-mannered and courteous to the point of saturation, Lord Willingdon did the noble gesture of showing his desire to meet Gandhi. The conversation that day as narrated by Gandhi is important, for years later, when Gandhi wanted to meet this same Lord Willingdon, then recently appointed Viceroy of India, the reception he met with was a little different from that which he got in Bombay. "I ask one thing of you", Lord Willingdon said in 1914, " I would like you to come and see me whenever you propose to take any steps regarding the Government. . . . You may come to me whenever you like and you will see that my Government does not wilfully do anything wrong." How well spoken were those lines in that perfect diction that marked every speech of his. Gandhi replied : "It is that faith that sustains me."

And remember that when we come to Willingdon, the Viceroy.

After this tête-a-tête with Willingdon, Gandhi went to Poona. And Gokhale died. It was a great blow to Gandhi. No one in the whole galaxy of Indian leaders had impressed Gandhi so much — not even the great Tilak, who had come nearer to the masses. As Gandhi said, Tilak was like the Himalayas — great, lofty, unapproachable; Gokhale was like the holy Ganges in which one could confidently take a plunge. Now Gokhale had gone and a greater responsibility had fallen on Gandhi's shoulders. But other personal problems occupied his mind. He began to take decisive steps to shape the conduct of his life. He discarded the sacred thread of Hinduism because the untouchables who were his fellow-religionists were deprived of that privilege. He was adamant in his decision to discard this external symbol of his religion. But the other — the tuft of hair in the middle of the head — he allowed to grow again because, as he put it, he saw no harm in it. Yet what really pre-occupied him was the establishment of a new sanctuary on the lines of the Phoenix and the Tolstoi farms, where he could sit back and ponder on the problems of India, surrounded by those of his followers, who had seen him through his South African struggle and those new ones he was gradually to acquire.

It was in Ahmedabad — not far from the smoke of the textile mills, which were turning out cloth from cotton, that he found a suitable spot for an Ashram after his heart. He made it clear to those caste Hindus, who had given him the necessary monetary help, that he would take the first opportunity of admitting the untouchable to this Ashram if he was a man worthy of being admitted. With such an ominous proclamation of equality Sabarmati Ashram was started. From it were later to be despatched some of the greatest political documents of our time.

Gandhi had promised Gokhale that he would start no political movement in India until he had travelled widely through the country and had understood the needs of the masses. The great cities of Bombay and Calcutta

were far removed from the real India, that lay secluded from the onslaught of western civilization. India was basically a conglomeration of little villages. The conception of provinces and a federation was a sophistication that came much later. The real India most of us had never seen — we, who talked glibly of Empires, of swaraj, of democracy, of republics. We were content to read reports of insignificant happenings that appeared every morning in the bourgeois papers, to which we faithfully subscribed. No one doubted for a moment a single word of what appeared in their columns. No one paused to think that these papers were run by Europeans, whose purpose it was to draw a picture of the happenings in India to suit England's Imperialist policy. The security of the raj was the *sine qua non*, without which their gigantic press machines would never rotate. Those of us who learnt how to read and write, found at the end of our education that we had little now to learn except that our fellow men were steeped in illiteracy and that we were unfit even to ask for the right to govern ourselves. That was what English journalism, which had migrated to India, had done for us. As we propped up our morning paper and glanced through its editorials, written in English by Englishmen, we wondered how anyone could possibly doubt that the British connection had been to our advantage. The British raj stood at its zenith and those institutions, which were exclusively European, were like the Holy Land, upon which no one but the privileged could tread.

Yet all this was only in the big cities. Deeper in the heart of India, the picture that presented itself to Gandhi was even more grim and depressing. His dominant feeling at entering rural India was that stagnation had set in the mind of the people. Energy seemed to have died within them, and life moved only in terms of time, measured by hours, days, months, years. Otherwise the masses had not progressed at all. Their condition had remained the same from generation to generation. Their existence was negative, for they lived through the allotted span of years measuring their success or failure in

life in terms of the things that did not happen to them. Were they any more in debt than their fathers? Were there any more early deaths in their family? How often did disease take them to the jaws of death? Were there more famines in their time? Were there more droughts and floods and earthquakes?

All this they reviewed when on their death-bed they lay surveying in those brief moments the whole course of their lives. About other things they had learnt to be blissfully ignorant. They never questioned the tax that was levied on their land and their chattels. They never asked whom the government represented and whether the levying of a tax was legal or not. They had learnt to bear and bear patiently the suffering that was inflicted on them. They were content to look upon the individual, who collected the tax, as the symbol of majesty and government. "If the sahib was ill and needed a visit to the hills, the tenants had to pay a special tax called *paparhi*. If he needed a horse or an elephant or a motor car, the tenants must bear the cost and pay special taxes, known as *ghorahi*, *hathiahi*, and *hawahi*." These dues are reminiscent of those levied in feudal England at the time of the Norman Conquest, and which disappeared by the thirteenth century. The irony of it was that they were to be found in the India of our time. It was still part of the law of the land to which the poor peasantry had perforce to subscribe.

It was not one solitary tax that acted to India's detriment. The whole system of government was calculated to promote England's Imperialist policy rather than advance the welfare of the Indian masses. The distribution of Indian revenues was in the hands of a bureaucracy, which was largely English and whose business it was to see that "Imperial Defence" was first cared for, even if "Education" lagged far behind. India paid to glorify the prestige of the Empire. Rumours circulated about a growing mortality, about an increase in disease and a corresponding decline in the health of the country. But, said the editorials of our morning paper, they were false

rumours, started by the mischievous, who were jealous of the peace and prosperity which reigned within the raj. How could we in the face of what we read every morning in cold print believe these "false" rumours? So we had moved on from year to year with the voice of the Congress faintly echoing the anguished cry of the masses.

All this Gandhi watched and his eyes reflected the agonies of those, who uncomplainingly suffered. It did not take him long to realize that the problem of India was different to that of South Africa. There it was to secure an equality of status for the coloured man that Gandhi had fought. But India wanted a change in the fundamental ideas of government. It was not the sort of change that could be effected in a single day. It would take years to awaken the people from their heavy slumber and to get them to shake off their lethargy. That was the problem of India as it presented itself to this "wizard", who had arrived after performing some astonishing feats in South Africa.

VI

CONGRESS-WAR-MONTAGU

A FEEBLE EFFORT HAD BEEN MADE TO CONCENTRATE the energies of India into one single effort, and to direct Indian public opinion into some definite channel. A body had been in existence for many years, which claimed to express organized political opinion in India. Its full name was the Indian National Congress, though it was more commonly referred to as "The Congress." It was inaugurated on December the 28th, 1885, when in the fine building of the Sanscrit College at Poona, a man, by name, W. C. Bonnerjee, took his seat on the raised dais as the first President of the Congress and delivered his address. It was an Englishman, by name Hume, a Companion of the Order of the Bath, who first thought it would be of advantage to the country if leading Indian politicians could be brought together once a year to discuss *social* matters and "be upon friendly footing with each other." No wonder the Order of the Bath is now so sparingly given.

That was the humble beginning from which was later to evolve the most powerful body of political opinion in India. Sitaramayya, the official Congress historian says: "Great institutions have always had small beginnings even as the great rivers start as thin streams. At the commencement of their career and course they progress rapidly, and, as they widen, become slower and steadier. By the confluence of their various tributaries, they are enriched as they flow on, both in volume and in content. The evolution of the Indian National Congress presents the same phenomena. It had to cut its way through mighty obstacles and, therefore, entertained modest ideals. As it gained a foothold on the affections of the people it widened its course and absorbed into itself several collateral movements, wedded to the solution of social, ethical and economic problems. Its activities were in the earlier stages naturally characterized by a sense of diffidence and doubt. As it attained man's estate, it became more and more conscious of its strength and capacity and its outlook was soon widened. From an attitude of prayerfulness and importunity, it developed self-consciousness and self-assertion. This was followed by an intensive campaign of education and propaganda, which rapidly resulted in extensive organization of the country and campaigns of direct action. Starting with the humble object of seeking redress of grievances, the Congress ere long developed into the one accredited organ of the nation that proudly put forth its demands. Limited as its range of vision was in the decades to matters administrative, it soon became a powerful and authoritative exponent of the political ambitions of the people of India. Its doors were thrown open to every class of citizens and to every grade of society. Though in the beginning it fought shy of problems that were described as social, yet in the fullness of time it recognized no such compartmentalism of life; and surviving the traditional and time-honoured demarcation of life's issues as social and political, it has developed a comprehensive ideal in which life is considered as one and indivisible."

That was the body from which had sprung some of India's greatest sons. Dadabhai Naoroji, the grand old man of India; Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, who had gone before him; Gokhale who was dead; Tilak, who was still alive. That was the body which Gandhi was to dominate one day.

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The origin of the War, if analysed too literally, would be traced to the murder at Sarajevo of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand. It happened six thousand miles away from the India over which the genius of Lord Hardinge presided. It was quite clear that a million Indian troops were not fighting for the neutrality of Belgium, nor did the roar of the Emden's guns rouse Indian feeling at the time. It was rather because India saw in Great Britain the champion of liberty and freedom, that India gave so freely to the British War Exchequer. Gandhi, that disciple of Ahimsa, contrary to his best convictions, had thrown in his lot with his rulers for justice, for democracy, for goodwill among nations, which he thought the Empire stood for, and which Britain was fighting to achieve.

It was an ironical situation. The Lord Bishop of Calcutta had admitted that it was hypocritical to pray for victory over autocracy in Europe and at the same time maintain it in India. Somehow India never saw it in that light at the time.

It must not be thought that this was India's first contribution towards strengthening the imperial might of England. There had been maintained in India a steadily growing military expenditure, which the people of India had no other alternative but to bear. During forty-five years — 1859 to 1904 — Indian troops were engaged in thirty-seven major and minor military expeditions. There were ten wars — the two Chinese, the Bhutan War, one Abyssinian, two Afghan, one Egyptian, one Burmese, and two Tibetan. As a result of this "the frontier of India was shifted from the line of the Indus to the western slope of the Suleiman range and from Peshawar to Quetta." Upper Burma was annexed and Tibet was twice invaded.

Besides these there were twenty-seven minor expeditions, to which must be added the sending of troops to Malta and Cyprus in 1878 and the facing of an expenditire of over two million pounds sterling to combat the alleged Russian menace in 1884. This is only a rough estimate of India's contribution to Britain's imperial policy ten years before Britain launched out to avenge the wrong that had been done to the neutral Belgian territory. The Indian National Congress had voiced in what manner it could, the protest of a nation, whose resources were being drained in order to plant the Union Jack more firmly on Empire soil. But what was a solitary, unheard voice that cried out midst the booming of guns that roared to the tune of 'Rule Britannia'?

With the war, a new sense of moral values seemed to have swept over England. A convict released to go to the front, could return amidst the ranks of survivors, distinguished for bravery by that highest of all decorations — the Victoria Cross. Why could this change not also be reflected in England's attitude towards India? Gandhi's faith in England's new spirit could not entirely be misplaced. Following the mismanagement of the Mespot campaign, a full-dress debate took place in the Commons, in which the Secretary of State for India, Sir Austen Chamberlain, unsuccessfully withstood the onslaught of the young Montagu. Austen Chamberlain resigned and the young man of thirty-six stepped into India Office. Unlike others, who held that important post before or since, Edwin Montagu was familiar with Indian conditions. Five years before, he had made an extensive tour of India and in a speech he made at the Guildhall, he dealt a death-blow to that over-rated prestige, to which the British Empire was said to owe its continued existence. He saw clearly that England would not hold India by Conservative statesmanship, but only by the free will and consent of those whom it governed. On the 20th of August of that same year, 1917, he made his epic pronouncement with the full assent of His Majesty's Government — a pronouncement to the interpretation of which can be

traced much of the unpleasantness that has followed. The goal of British policy in India was for the first time laid down in what then appeared to be a clear, crystal-like, concise declaration. It ran: "The policy of His Majesty's Government is that of the increasing association of Indians in every branch of administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire."

It was as if a new star had suddenly appeared on a dark night to twinkle brightly over the Indian horizon. It had hitherto been undiscovered by the political astronomers. Like the Pole star, it gave the Indian world a sense of direction. Here then was evidence of that good-faith in which Gandhi believed. The Montagu pronouncement was to be a landmark in the relationship between these two countries of the Empire. The dawn had come, Gandhi thought, as he reviewed this declaration of British policy, which lent itself to a variety of interpretations. Even though the pace at which India was to move towards responsible government was slow and mean and grudging, it did not detract from that original gesture, which Montagu made out of courage and sympathy and foresight, and which the British Government adopted, uncertain, as it still was, of the result of the War into which they had taken a headlong plunge.

VII

OUT OF THE SHELL

GANDHI'S PROMISE TO GOKHALE NOT TO START satyagraha in India until he had travelled all over the country and gained experience, was faithfully kept. When C. F. Andrews asked him whether a time would come for such a movement in India, he was reluctant to give a precise answer. He seemed unwilling to pronounce an opinion. Nor did he take any active part in the Congress of 1915 which he attended. He declined to enter Indian politics, and when the elder Nehru and others, who had heard of his activities in South Africa, urged him, he said that he did not wish to step in at the moment and that he would rather wait for the right time to come. He was content to be regarded as a specialist on South African affairs, on which he framed resolutions for the Congress and spoke and made some revealing statements. But on all matters which went to the root of India's struggle for freedom he preferred to remain a silent spectator. Even so, on those few occasions on which he rose to speak either on the Congress platform or elsewhere, the way he swayed a

cosmopolitan crowd made one feel that he was different from those, who had spoken to them before. Almost singular in his way of thinking, a little more sure of himself than the others, he caught the imagination of the listeners not so much by crisp epigrams and choice phraseology, but by a sincerity which held his listeners spellbound and commanded their respect. He was something fresh and novel in Indian politics. In his speech there was a clarity of expression which made every point lucid, definite, certain. He was natural. He did not strive after effect, but he gripped the Indian mind.

There were two occasions on which Gandhi came out of his shell. The one was at the opening of the Hindu University at Benares. It was an event of first class importance, and there had come to Benares the pick of Indian princes and the Viceroy. The streets of the holy city were lined with cordons of police, who paraded the city in order to preserve law and order and to make the person of the Viceroy safe from any possible attack. There was a meeting, which all Indian Princes attended. The Maharaja of Darbhanga presided, and on the raised dais sat the great ruling chiefs of India, with their expensive jewellery and in their extravagant robes. Each one was vieing with the other in pomp and majesty, as if they had met for the sole purpose of showing off their jewels and their wealth.

Gandhi went to this meeting out of curiosity. He had no other motive. As he sat and listened to the lip service that prince paid to prince, he became uneasy in his chair. At last he rose in that great assembly of vested interests — a somewhat unknown person — and with the President's permission began to speak on a matter that worried him intensely. He spoke of the police vigilance in honour of the Viceroy and the hordes of policemen that swamped the city. "Rather be shot a thousand times", he said, "than be followed by a pack of policemen."

A hushed assembly turned round to see this stranger in its midst. A murmur ran through the whole crowd. On the platform there was confusion, and prince conferred

with prince as to the identity of this Mr. Gandhi of whom they had never heard. They were sure he was of no consequence. Only Mrs. Besant, who sat on the platform remembered those Kathiawari features as being those of a young man who had recently appeared at the meetings of the Congress — a child in politics, she said to those around her.

Gandhi finished with the Viceroy and his police guard. He then went on to tackle the princes themselves. He told them how empty was their pomp and how unimportant they really were in the India that mattered. The President, unaccustomed to such gross impoliteness — for the Princes never spoke to each other except with the utmost courtesy — did not know how to handle the situation. It was unprecedented and had come as a complete surprise to everyone. But this unknown, insignificant little man was carrying the crowd with him. They cheered him. He spoke their thoughts. If only they could think freely and speak like him without fear! Those on the platform were too dumbfounded to do or to say anything. Eventually the President was seen to get up and leave. He was followed by the other princes, while Gandhi stood there still addressing a meeting, which had lost its Chairman, its sponsors, its honoured guests.

It was a spectacular achievement. It was also his first great impromptu speech. His personality clearly emerged from it. The self-imposed restraint had gone, and he let loose his power of invective, such as he has seldom done. It gave those present an idea of the fighter in him. Mrs. Besant, who was left on the platform, got up and tried to restore order out of the chaos that followed. She remonstrated with the speaker for his lack of tact and good sense, but it was too late. Gandhi had spoken and the Princes had left. The meeting was already dissolved.

There is no mention of this in Gandhi's autobiography. Nor is there anything but a very brief mention of it in any of the other biographies. But the incident is nevertheless a true one, vouched for by those who were present. Looking back on it now, these eye-witnesses

remember how amazed they were at this unbridled outburst. Some of them had never seen him before. No one except a very few had heard him speak. Scarcely anyone was aware of his presence in the place. How different it is today when the presence of the Mahatma anywhere makes a whole audience, however large, instinctively conscious of his presence.

The other occasion was when he consented to go to Champaran, because the peasants had sent word to the Congress of the oppression they suffered. Gandhi went because their complaint was similar to that of the indentured labourers of South Africa. It was his first Indian experiment, and he was a little hesitant in making it.

Champaran is a comparatively unknown district, north-west of the province of Bihar. Bihar itself is towards the east of India. Nearly a hundred years ago there had come to it a host of indigo planters, who gradually began to have a hold on the peasantry and to force them to grow indigo, even though this was not profitable to the peasants. Other cultivation suffered in consequence and the wages from indigo cultivation were very nominal. On a few occasions the cultivator had rebelled against this compulsion, but all such risings were severely crushed.

The trouble began when synthetic dyes made indigo cultivation almost valueless, and the planters had to close down their factories. There were heavy losses and the planters wanted to shift these losses on to the cultivator by compelling him to execute a new lease, the terms of which were inequitous. It meant in fact that there would be compulsory enhancement of rent at a time when cultivation was valueless. The tenants protested, but the interests of the planters were so well protected by the government that the peasants dared not seek any judicial remedy without seriously endangering their property and their person. Moreover, the planters had secured their position by a clause in the Tenancy Act, which saved this enhancement of rent from being regarded as illegal.

When Gandhi arrived in Champaran in April 1917, he intended to stay there a day or two and view the situa-

tion. He had included Champaran in a tour of Calcutta, Patna, and other places. But when he got as near to it as Patna, Gandhi knew the work in Champaran "might take even two years" and he was prepared, if necessary, to give it that time. Naturally his reception at the hands of the authorities was far from cordial. Firmly but politely he was advised to leave the district. It was the sort of attitude which made him more obdurate.

Gandhi collected his co-workers round him and set out towards Champaran. On the way, he was served with a Government Order asking him to refrain from going to Champaran and to leave the district. Gandhi refused to do this and was, thereupon, summoned to appear the next day before the Magistrate and stand his trial.

The news of Gandhi's trial had spread rapidly through the district. There was consternation among the higher circles because no one had ever disobeyed a government order. They were more amazed when he pleaded guilty to the charge. These were tactics to which the authorities were not accustomed. They viewed with suspicion a prisoner, who deliberately defied an order and then pleaded guilty to the charge.

Not content with having upset all the calculations of the prosecution, he made his first statement in an Indian court explaining his reasons for disobeying the order. He gave his reasons for entering the district, and said that his intention was to render "humanitarian and national service." He added: "As a law-abiding citizen my first instinct would be to obey the order served upon me. But I could not do so without doing violence to my sense of duty towards those for whom I have come." Later in that same statement we get a glimpse of his self-assurance. Though almost unknown in Champaran and by no means a leader of any great consequence, he said as early as on the date of that trial: "I am fully conscious of the fact that a person holding in the public life in India a position such as I do, has to be most careful in setting an example."

What was the position he held in the public life of India at the time of the Champaran incident? He was not by any means an All-India figure nor was he regarded by the great majority of men as a man of any political standing. Gandhi had himself refused to be associated actively with India's political struggle. It was only as an authority on South Africa that he was respected in the Congress — and South Africa was such a vague place in those days. Yet the confidence with which he spoke of his position in the public life of India, revealed his faith in himself and in his ability to enter the Indian scene whenever he desired. Coming events had cast their shadow before. Yet that statement was not without its little philosophy. For he ended by saying: ". . . . I have disregarded the order served upon me not for want of respect for lawful authority, but in obedience to the higher law of our being, the voice of conscience."

Gandhi finished. The Magistrate looked a trifle perplexed. He cleared his throat in the orthodox legal fashion. He moved restlessly in his chair. He stroked his chin. The law of God and the voice of conscience, he reflected, had never been cited in his court by a prisoner. To his one-track, legal mind it appeared to be a question of jurisdiction. Could a case based on the law of God be tried in Champaran? If so, by whom and how? He fumbled for the books of reference, which were not there. He had always been given to understand that the High Court of Justice was the supreme Court. But did that Court administer the law of God? In a hundred and fifty years of British Justice and Administration, no one had pleaded so strangely. Faced with this dilemma he thought it proper to postpone judgment.

Next day the same Magistrate informed Gandhi that His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor had ordered the case to be withdrawn. Gandhi was at liberty to conduct the inquiry, free and unhindered.

What had happened to the prestige of Britain and the Empire?

The next year saw Gandhi in Gujerat, where in the district of Kaira there was an unexpected shortage of crops. It was the unwritten rule of revenue assessment that when a crop did not come up a quarter of the full-harvest, the rent payable to the Government was suspended for that year. The dispute at Kaira was about the quantity of the crop. The Government alleged that it was above the quarter mark, while the cultivator disputed this and claimed to be exempt from the rent. This dispute had come to a head in Kaira, and it was the question which Gandhi had to solve.

But Kaira had a deeper significance. Never before had the peasant questioned the authority of Government on the matter of assessment. Whatever the Government decided was final and irrevocable and the only remedy available to the peasant was the ineffective remedy of representation and petition. But this had never succeeeded. Only sometimes the Government would promise to look more carefully into the grievances of the petitioner. But the assessment would always stand as it was and the peasant had to pay the rent or quit.

Kaira was, therefore, the first rural and mass challenge to authority. Champaran had been a non-political achievement. Gandhi had excluded the press from it. It was devoid of all publicity. Kaira was spectacular, symbolic — the first direct expression of the masses. The old methods of negotiation were discarded. There were no chosen representatives running round the out-houses of the Secretariat in the hope of securing an interview with the third secretary to Government. There was no more humble submission in the petitions they drew up. There was no petition at all. The retort of Kaira to the Government's demand of taxation was definite and emphatic. Under Gandhi's leadership and that of another figure who emerged into India's political life about that time—Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel—the peasants became resolute in their demand. They did not dread the confiscation of their land. They were not afraid of being sent to prison. Something had happened to make these

timid people, who had been trampled upon all through their lives, stand up and offer resistance to authority, which was hitherto unquestioned. It was a great blow to the prestige of Government, for no amount of imprisonment would secure that obedience, which the Government were once able to compel. Most unexpectedly the authorities recognized the claims of the peasants and suspended the tax on the poorer of the peasantry without making any ostentatious announcement about the suspension. Kaira was, therefore, another personal triumph for Gandhi and he learnt from it that Satyagraha appealed to the Indian mind.

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It was now April 1918. Chelmsford was in Delhi and the War was in its fourth year. He had summoned the Indian leaders to a conference, partly to recruit more intensely for Britain, partly to make the Indians feel they were important.

To this conference Gandhi went with much uneasiness of conscience. His discomfort was partly because of a rumour that England was negotiating some secret treaty, which was not an honourable thing to do and partly because the Ali brothers, leaders of Moslem thought in India, were at that very moment in solitary confinement for having expressed political opinions, which protested against England's participation in that part of the war, which was waged against Islamic Turkey and the Holy Land. But after certain assurances from the Viceroy, which eased his conscience, he went to Delhi.

It was not a very historic conference, nor did it make any great contribution to the national life of India. That veteran Indian leader, Pandit Malaviya, had said something about obliterating all distinctions and making the soldiers they enlisted feel equal to anyone else fighting beside them. Gandhi had contented himself by seconding a resolution moved by the Gaekwar of Baroda, declaring India's loyalty to the King-Emperor, who had sent a message to the effect that "the need of the Empire is India's opportunity". He had spoken one sentence at that Conference.

they were the only words he uttered, but they were historic for he spoke them in Hindustani, the first time that at any Viceregal meeting anyone had dared to speak in the language of the country. Translated it meant: "With a full sense of my responsibility, I beg to support the resolution."

The Conference broke up in an unnecessary blaze of glory and Gandhi visited a few towns in his effort to recruit. The villagers of Kaira to whom he went first asked how his appeal for volunteers was consistent with his avowal of non-violence. Gandhi was at a loss to explain. However, when he came back to his newly formed Ashram, he suddenly took ill. The vision of death came near him for the first time and he imagined that he was nearing his end.

Meanwhile, Vallabhbhai Patel, the Sardar, came rushing to his bedside with the news that the war was over, and that Germany had hoisted the white flag. But midst the physical pain he suffered, he did not realize the significance of this news. He only knew how his body was limp and tormented and how difficult it was to adhere to his vows and refrain from all those things which the doctors considered most essential in order to build up his strength—milk, beef-tea—all this which he would never touch. It was fortunate that his wife very timely suggested that his avowal was only to abstain from cow's milk. Gandhi acceeded to medical advice to substitute it with the milk of the goat. Goat's milk and Gandhi ?—and Low, Strube and the political cartoonists of the world had got one more subject to caricature.

VIII

DIGRESSION

THE WAR WAS OVER AND THE SOULS OF THE LIVING cried out for the dead. There was something sad about the crowds that were celebrating the signing of the Armistice. The men and women who danced in the streets of Paris were not really happy. The people who waved their Union Jacks outside Buckingham Palace, and sang "Land of Hope and Glory" were conscious of the absence of those who were not spared to rejoice with them. In the homes of the vanquished there was an even greater wailing. No one knew how dark would be the future that lay ahead. They only knew that the wounds of the living would take a long time to heal. Those who were too old to fight saw a generation, to which they themselves had given birth, get wiped off the face of this earth. It had vanished from sight. No one knew where it went or why. It was like the end of a nightmare that was grim and ghostlike and the memory of a son or a husband haunted some poor little soul, who had made her greatest sacrifice. The Arc de Triomphe was a little ashamed of itself. Admiralty

Arch preferred to have its gates closed. In spite of the victory there was a great mourning. It was not only a national mourning. It was the sorrow of a whole civilisation, almost of a world. Philip Guedalla described it well when he said: "....Though the thunder of the War died on the distance, a shattered world still rocked to the long swell. The clouds hung low over a world of broken lives in which eight million men had died, of endless vistas of annihilation, towns without recognizable remains, the sea-floor littered with dead shipping, and a lunar landscape of inhuman surfaces where fields had been. Death, disease, and devastation stalked almost uncontrolled among the scared survivors with the crash still ringing in their ears, as they surveyed a world whose map was a delirium of fragmented empires."

In Russia the revolution had already broken out. The streets of St. Petersburg were washed in purple blood. The Czar had fled, but had been captured and murdered. It was as if there had been a major earthquake in those parts of the world, uprooting some of the mightiest trees, which were once great empires. As Europe awoke after the Armistice, it wondered why the guns were silent that morning, and whether this quiet that prevailed was the end of the war or the end of the world. They had fought for honour and glory. Now they fought in the streets for black bread and a morsel to keep body and soul together. Many a man had returned home to find that it stood there no more. Everything had vanished in the twinkling of an eye — a twinkling that lasted four long years. The little tree he had planted and which he had fondly nursed for many long years had withered. His favourite dog did not rush out to greet him. Something had happened to this world. Every corner of Europe was a landmark of someone who had fallen there. The crosses that were planted on the battlefields of Europe were so many crucifixes on which they had pinned their martyrs. The only difference was that when counted by the millions, the price of martyrdom had fallen. The eight million dead had equally made their sacrifice. The flower of manhood

had died. The soul of man remained tortured. The pawn value of the Victoria Cross stood at a few shillings only.

It was not like this in Europe alone. The evil of the War had spread to every corner of the world. Life seemed so uncertain that men were content to live for the moment saying "Hell" to the morrow. There was a rush to conquer the key positions and a false sense of prosperity had taken hold of a world whose days seemed to have been numbered. New ideas of pleasure came into existence. New professions were created. Even the people one met and spoke to, did different things from what they used to do before the War. Money meant nothing except what it could buy at that moment. The inflation of the mark in Germany showed that you could sit on a pile of a million mark notes and still starve for a loaf of bread. Gold had remained a somewhat cherished possession, but even that would offer little security when the scientists of the world were working at full speed because someone had said that it could be synthetically produced. Fortunes were made overnight and lost as easily. The War had thrown up a precarious crop of millionaires. Theirs was blood money, made in a number of cases by those who had contracts to supply raw material or food that was to be used in the war. Bribery and corruption were rampant.

Indian mentality seemed happy in these uncertain post-war surroundings. Speculation had made and lost many a fortune. The rich man of yesterday was trying to make a bed on a bench in the park. A pauper was trying out his new Rolls–Royce. The standard of living of the middle-classes was artificially raised and altogether there was a false sense of prosperity prevailing in India. The presence of a few millionaires amongst us made us appear a rich nation and the Indian princes with their extravagance completed the picture. No one thought in terms of the masses, whose poverty remained unchanged. The average annual income of the Indian when the war was over and the boom period began, was estimated at four pounds. Four pounds a year! Compare that with the dole and you will get an idea of the poverty of India.

All over the world there was a general re-shuffling of political ideas. Cobden and Gladstone were long since dead. They were as lifeless as the models that stood in Tussauds. New faces appeared on the front pages of the morning paper. New creeds, hitherto unheard of, were claiming pride of place besides those which once held the world in sway. It was the exciting age of Communism and Fascism, and the old theory of laissez-faire and the old ideas of democracy were being carried away in a back-wash. It was a restless world that the war had thrown up. The wave of nationalism which spread over it was only a phase of that same restlessness. The war had altered the frontiers of Europe. It had distorted the map of the world. But the British Empire still remained as large as ever. There was in fact more red on the map.

India was one of those red bits that went to make up the Empire. Far away from the scene of corpses, it did not feel the effects of the war to the same extent as the countries on whose territory it was fought. India heard of the war chiefly through the pages of the papers it read, but the great majority that could neither read nor write did not know of it. They did not know where Europe was. Was it any nearer than the sun and the moon and the stars to which people went but never returned ? And why should there be a war ? Was one king wanting to be more powerful than the other ? And what happened then ? They sat and listened as they would to a fairy tale told at the village fair.

One must bear in mind all these facts when attempting to value the importance of the coming of Gandhi. One must have a true perspective of India at the time Gandhi arrived on the scene to begin his domination of Indian politics. It was even to him a new country. The few thousand Indians, who had followed him in South Africa, were like a drop in the ocean when compared to the millions in India. His dominant feeling at studying Indian conditions was one of painful surprise at the appalling poverty of India. A hundred and fifty years of British rule had done little to allay the sufferings of the

masses. Instead, he thought, the presence of the British was responsible for them to a large extent. The heritage of the masses was not property but poverty. It was debt that passed down from father to son and the system of usary that prevailed made it impossible for the individual to shake off the burden of debt under which he was born, and which hung round his neck for the rest of his life, until it finally choked him and he died.

The Government of India was disgracefully bureaucratic. Viceroys came and went every five years. They had hardly time midst their social rounds to the Indian Princes and their visits to hill resorts to get to grips with the Indian problem and when they got somewhere near it, it was usually time for them to retire. There was also that loyal band of Empire builders which poured in from every part of the British Isles to carry on the tradition that had been handed down to them by their fathers. There was that *esprit de corps* among them as there was among those who wore the same old school-tie. They had only one ideal in life — to make money as quickly as possible and then to spend the rest of their days on a farm in Sussex or in a little cottage on the Cornish coast, contributing occasionally to the columns of the *Times*, when India figured in the news. The more decent among them carried out their ideal with as little injustice to the Indian as was possible, though always bearing in mind their main objective, which was to make money and to make it quickly. When their wives came to India it was only at great discomfort and personal sacrifice. They cursed the weather when the days got hot, swore at the servants because they did not speak English, and counted the days on their calendar when they would be sailing "home" again. They would never give birth to children in India, because that would deprive them of caste. The victory of the Allies had put a premium on the 'pucca sahib.' It was something to be born a white man, but it was still better to be born in the country of white men.

Englishmen became sure of themselves. The war had given them that confidence. They were also more

arrogant in their behaviour. They felt superior because of their recent victory. And they argued that if they could bring a strong German Empire to its knees, what could they not do to a weak, poverty-stricken India. It was a great thing to be a little white God in the days after the War.

Indian fathers began to plan their sons' future. Business was alright and quite respectable, but how much better it would be if their sons could mingle freely among their rulers and take part in all the pomp and majesty that was associated with the British rule. India had realized all too quickly what it meant to have the patronage of the British. It seemed to justify the humiliation and the injustice that they had suffered. Perhaps God had really guided the white man to the 'heathen's home.' Perhaps there was such a thing as the white man's burden. Perhaps the All-knowing and the All-mighty had destined that the fate of three hundred and seventy millions should be in Britain's hands even as the fate of Europe had fallen into the hands of the Allies.

The Congress was the only spokesman of India. But it was somewhat limited in its appeal, for it spoke of things like Independence and Home Rule, whereas the educated Indian was generally of the opinion, largely due to an English-controlled and Government-inspired press that it was an advantage to trail in the shadow of Britain. The Congress, therefore, was looked upon as something dangerous — something intoxicating, exhilarating, almost narcotic and not quite the right thing for a healthy and prospering nation. In one word it was "Bolshevic" — and that word in India at that time meant something terrible. It brought up visions of bloodshed and of prisons. It implied that the rich would be looted by the poor of all their money and that their women would be ill-treated and their children would starve. All this "Bolshevism" implied and there were rumours that the Congress organization was under the secret pay of Soviet Russia. It was one way of discrediting the Congress.

Moreover, it was the time to make some real money in India. The boom was already in sight and the bulls had swamped the markets. Should a nation waste its time at such a stage and worry about unimportant things like liberty and freedom ? Such were the thoughts uppermost in the minds of those who were a little sceptical of this one-time barrister who had been causing a lot of trouble in South Africa and who was likely to do the same here in India.

IX

1919

CHAMPARAN AND KAIRA WERE NOW FAR BEHIND. 1919 had appeared on the calendar, and the Government of India had brought into existence the Rowlatt Acts, which tried to replace in the hands of the Government that power which had temporarily been vested in them when the Defence of the Realm Acts were in force. The effect of the Rowlatt legislation was summed up as: "No pleader, no appeal, no argument."

The opposition in India to this autocratic power, which the Government claimed for itself, was chiefly on a matter of principle. It is one thing, the Indians said, to have extraordinary powers in an emergency period. The Defence of the Realm Acts had justified themselves. But to give the same power to the bureaucracy as a permanent safeguard was to threaten the civil liberty of the people. It was as if the Star Chamber had been revived in India, when it had been stamped out of existence in the country of its origin. England had paid for its Bill of Rights and France had paid even more dearly for its

liberty with the Revolution But the Government of India had forgotten the lessons of history. Stubbs seems to have been shelved by the high authorities that inaugurated the Rowlatt legislation.

It seems somewhat incongruous that the Government should have fought so hard to acquire powers which they did not once have occasion to use. It was a greater pity that they should, so soon after India's gallant contribution to the War, have mistrusted those same people who had gone to their help in the hour of Britain's need. It hurt Indian feelings that so soon after the victory, Britain should distrust and protect itself from its greatest ally.

When the bill was brought into the Supreme Legislative Council it was a mere formality. It had already been decided beforehand that these bills should come into force. The Viceroy, who appeared in the Council, had the privilege of hearing the rhetoric of that fine speaker, Shastri. The Indian *Hansard* will one day be read to great advantage by the students of English literature, and among the classics of that period will be numbered the speeches of Shrinivasa Shastri.

There is a beautiful story attributed to this most brilliant parliamentarian of our time. It is said that at one of the Viceregal parties, a new Viceroy who was taken aback by Shastri's command over the English language turned to him and remarked: "How is it that you speak English, which is not your mother tongue, so brilliantly ? Some of our best men who go to Oxford and Cambridge don't speak it so well."

And Shastri is said to have replied a little hesitantly: "Well, Sir, I really don't know. I suppose it must be the two thousand years of culture behind me."

"Oh yes ! Yes", the great Englishman vaguely answered.

This story has not been confirmed, but does it to anyone who knows the mind of an English bureaucrat need confirmation ?

It was this same Shastri that was attempting to convince the government not to bring the Rowlatt

legislation into existence. Shastri did not succeed. The Government of India were in no mood to listen to speeches when they had already made up their mind.

It was then that it came to Gandhi in a dream that he should call upon the country to observe a *hartal*, a complete closing of all business, as a sign of mourning for the passing of the liberty of the Indian people. The date fixed for the *hartal* was the date on which the legislation came into force. To see a vision was one thing. To translate it into action on the scale of an All-India demonstration was quite different. " What was it", says Sitaramayya, "that had endeared this comparative stranger in the country to all provinces and commended his equally strange programme of satyagraha to the people all over?"

You find the answer in "India 1919." It is the official answer.

"Mr. Gandhi", it says, "is generally considered a Tolstoyan of high ideals and complete selflessness. Since his stand on behalf of the Indians in South Africa, he has commanded among his countrymen all the traditional reverence with which the East envelopes a religious leader of acknowledged asceticism. In his case he possesses the added strength that his manners are not confined to any religious sect.....His readiness to take up the cudgels on behalf of any individual or class whom he regards as being oppressed has endeared him to the masses of his countrymen. In the case of the urban and rural population of many parts of the Bombay Presidency, his influence is unquestioned, and he is regarded with a reverence for which 'adoration' is scarcely too strong an equivalent. Believing as he does in the superiority of 'soul force' over material might, Mr. Gandhi was led to believe that it was his duty to employ against the Rowlatt Act that weapon of passive resistance which he had used effectively in South Africa."

And from so reliable a publication as "India" this has to be read with respect.

The day on which the Rowlatt Bills came into force, Delhi heard about it sooner than any other province and

there was a complete *hartal* held all over that province. It was the 30th of March — the day originally fixed for the *hartal*, but was later changed to the 6th of April, though too late to stop the demonstration in Delhi. Gandhi had inaugurated this with a fast. It was the most appropriate gesture that a leader who believed in the purification of the body in this struggle of the soul, could make.

A fast ! It shocked the politicians. It worried the statesmen. It brought a sneer on the faces of the bureaucrats at Delhi. "A fast !", they cynically said. But there was something in the simplicity of that gesture that appealed to the Indian mind. The Indians liked it. Though simple it was dramatic and striking. It was different from anything else that they had known before. It symbolized sacrifice. Man had *denied* himself on the eve of the struggle for liberty. It could have happened anywhere and at any time. But it had actually happened in India.

That day shooting took place in Delhi. How else could the Government have answered ? How else could they have proved that the Rowlatt legislation was necessary for the peace of this country ? But the hero of the day was the Swami, who led the procession through the streets of Delhi, and as the soldiers came from the opposite direction and threatened to shoot, he bared his chest. They did not shoot.

This was serious, the Government thought. They were not at home with non-violence. The cynics did not laugh any more.

The other great centre of storm was Bombay. Though not the capital, it was the key city of India. The Gateway of India had appropriately been erected in this cosmopolitan town that stretched its arm into the Indian ocean, its lighthouses giving the first signal to ships that here was India.

It was of its kind a great city. Like Shanghai, it had acquired for itself a reputation in the East. It had no outstanding features, except that on a clear night, you could see from Malabar Hill a panorama of twinkling lights

on the edge of the water—blue, glistening in the pale moonlight, quiet, peaceful and almost as still as the night. In the distance the tall chimneys of the mills stood up like the spires of some church where man offered his work to the gods. These tall, upright, dark silhouettes reflected against the lighter blue of the sky, tapering heavenwards like a finger raised in warning. They were pointing towards God. In the foliage that had clustered together in many a part, lay hidden the house of some rich Marwari banker, or some Parsee who had amassed a fortune, or an English official or a Jew from Baghdad, or a "Nabob" or diamond merchant. It was a cosmopolitan city, though all was quiet at that hour of the night. Unlike Paris there were no boulevards on which at night people sat and sipped cognac. No *trotoirs* on which women strolled from street-lamp to street-lamp, their yellow tickets in their worn-out bags. Unlike New York it had no clip-joints, unlike London no bottle-parties. There was only a district over which hung the red lamp, as blatant and symbolic as the three brass balls that hang over the pawn shop. The tourist, that passed through, looked for the Zoo and the Tower of Silence and the drive over Malabar Hill, and then sank into a chair to have a cocktail at the Taj, which is as well known as Shepherd's of Cairo. He had tried to see the burning ghat and a *masjid* but with little success. He had looked in vain for an old fort that dated back to the Moguls, or the caves of Ajanta or a river like the holy Ganges. But Bombay had none of these. It had only houses with red tiled roofs depicting a civilisation of brick and mortar that had been washed pale by the monsoon. It rained in Bombay for three months in the year and it rained hard. It poured for days on end, washing the streets clean till the dirt of the whole city had passed through the gutters. Sometimes the sewers burst when it rained too hard. Sometimes the streets were flooded when the drainage could not stand the strain, and all traffic was at a standstill when the water came almost knee-high. Plague and typhoid often broke out in the city proper, and the people with their limited

knowledge of public hygiene were content to look upon them as an act of God. The share-market was perhaps the barometer of the culture of its people. But in spite of limitations it was the merging of different strains in its blood stream that made Bombay the powerful city of India and the gateway of the East.

There was a long beach sheltered by the two arms that stretched out into the bay. It was not like the beach at Deauville or Miami or Brighton. Chowpatty knew no sophistication. It was strewn with the empty shells of cocoanuts in which a brisk trade went on. Cocoanut milk made a cool drink after the dust and heat of the day. Midst these shavings and the litter sat the lower middle class, who had gathered there to watch the sunset, and to wait for the blue hour to appear. It was on this same Chowpatty beach that Gandhi's satyagraha demonstration was held.

Gandhi's call to action shook even this city of Bombay from its complacent slumber. The prudes that lived in their red-roofed houses were a little shaken to find that the even tenor of their existence was put entirely out of gear because an eccentric man talked of "the rights of the people." Those in authority, conscious of the power of the government and the ruthlessness with which they could crush these childish efforts to disturb the peace, looked upon the movements of Gandhi with mild contempt, believing as they did that it was only a passing phase in Indian politics — a somewhat unconventional phase perhaps, but a phase nevertheless. Gandhi would probably be arrested and that would be the end of all this babble about liberty and freedom. Or perhaps the government did not even think it worth while giving Gandhi so much importance. But the clash had occurred. The clash between authority and the people. Gandhi who was on his way to the North, had been arrested and brought back to Bombay only to be set free. He arrived when the city was roused to fury. Impatient crowds, who had gathered because of the *hartal* wanted something to replace their work which was suspended. In India

when the people were at work they were in their shops or their mills or wherever their place of work was, but when they were out of a job, they gathered in the streets in large numbers, moving aimlessly from place to place. When Gandhi arrived on the Bombay scene, it was too late. The mounted police had charged into them. There was a panic and when some minutes later the crowds dispersed, he saw the bodies of his countrymen strewn over the streets, some dead, some badly wounded. He experienced a strange feeling, when he saw what had happened. It was a feeling of horror. But he was not afraid.

X

ONWARD CHRISTIAN SOLDIER!

THE UNREST IN INDIA SPREAD. NEWS CAME FROM all quarters of riots and disturbances. There were outbreaks of violence. The people, who were carried away by Gandhi's appeal, had not adopted his method. They had preferred a shorter cut even though it caused them more suffering and more physical pain, for the Government had in many places retaliated with the brute force at their command. It was not merely the police, armed with lathis and mounted on horseback, that were turned on the crowds, but also, as in the Punjab, the military that had been called out.

Amritsar in particular was conspicuous. The story of Amritsar is one which has two versions. It does not matter how unbiasedly one tries to tell it, the Englishman will feel more sympathy with his version as the Indian will with his. With this reservation, I prefer to give the Indian version. It is the version of those who suffered. It is the story which Gandhi believed to be true and in

this book it is only fair that I should state the facts which Gandhi believed, and which he acted upon. It was Amritsar that led him to take an active part in the politics of India. His domination over Indian politics was soon to follow. The details of this Amritsar story are not and never have been in dispute. It is the interpretation put upon the facts by the two sides that differs. The things that will differ will be the motives, fears, forethought and malice. These will lead to different conclusions. The Englishman and the Indian cannot be expected to see eye to eye on Amritsar. Blood is thicker than water.

Let us examine the facts. The Punjab is the stronghold of the martial instincts of India. It is the recruiting ground of the Indian army. The Punjabi is by instinct a fighter. He is made that way. His physique makes him suited for the task. This significant fact was known to the authorities as it is to anyone, who has taken any reasonable interest in India.

There were two personalities in this Amritsar incident whose names sound strangely similar. There was the Governor of the Punjab, or to be more precise the Lieutenant-Governor, whose name was O'Dwyer. He was knighted as Governors always are. The head of the military section was General Dyer. Much later, when the Congress met at Lahore, some enthusiastic young man with a flair for rhyme and metre was responsible for the poster which hung at the entrance to the city and which read :

We welcome you to the land,
Dyed red by Dyer
And oppressed by O'Dwyer.

It seemed as if the fates had conspired to have these two persons on the scene at the same crucial moment. The Governor was particularly keen that this home of India's martial forces should not be polluted by the politics of the Congress. He was not too keen on allowing the Congress to hold its meeting in the Punjab. He had already received news of the demonstrations in other parts of India. The happenings in Delhi on March the 30th and

the happenings in other parts of India on April the 6th had been disastrous. O'Dwyer, therefore, decided to nip civil disobedience in the bud and on the 10th of April, the District Magistrate of Amritsar, which is situated in the Punjab, sent for the two local Congress leaders, Dr. Kitchlew and Dr. Satyapal, a lawyer and a doctor respectively, arrested them and removed them to an unknown destination. As these two were entrusted with the arrangements for the forthcoming meeting of the Congress, the Government thought they had frustrated the Congress idea.

But the Government had misjudged the enthusiasm of the people for Gandhi and the Congress. When the people heard of this inexplicable disappearance of two of their leaders, they gathered in great numbers and decided to march towards the house of the District Magistrate to ask him for an explanation. There was, it is hardly necessary to say, a great deal of excitement. It was not as if they were going to pay a social call, but they were, nevertheless, unarmed. Even so, the psychological effect of a whole host of people marching towards his house must have been unnerving, for the crowd marched on shouting the names of the leaders. As he sat in his house, surrounded by his escort, the unfortunate magistrate heard the shouts coming nearer. A little restlessly he paced up and down his room. His conscience was not too clear. He was afraid of what he had done and he gave instructions to the military guard at the level crossing, which separated the city from the Civil Lines, not to let that crowd pass under any circumstances. When the crowd came to the level crossing, it was, therefore, fired upon. That was a mistake. There were several injured and one or two deaths. The crowd was enraged beyond all calculation. What else did the authorities expect ?

The crowd carried the dead and the wounded back into the city. They thirsted for revenge. The white man was to them the cause of death and destruction. And they took their vengeance on the first white men they could lay hands on. They marched into the National Bank of India and killed its manager. A ghastly, brutal

murder with no personal motive whatsoever. Thus an innocent Englishman was killed. There were others who were picked at random. Five Englishmen were killed that day and for the first time since the mutiny in India, a terror ran through the white people. India was out for blood, they thought. The panic was widespread and at once the white population gathered behind the strong walls of the Fort, seeking refuge from the wrath and vengeance of the Indian people. Their fears were not unfounded. A bank had been set fire to. A railway goods-shed and some buildings had been burnt.

Besides — and this was too much for the prestige of Britain — an English woman, a Miss Sherwood, had been knocked off her bicycle in a lane in Amritsar and though Indians themselves were the first to go to her help and to give her all assistance and to admonish the hooligans who were responsible, the fact remained that an English woman had been knocked off her bicycle in some part of the Empire. What would the House of Commons have to say and what answer would the Secretary of State for India give to the people of England? ONE ENGLISH WOMAN! At the hands and the mercy of the "natives" of India! It was too much for England and even the most meek among them began to see red and to cry for vengeance.

To compensate for this loss of prestige, martial law was formally declared on April the 15th. It is pertinent to add that the military had virtually taken control of Amritsar before the proclamation of martial law. On the 13th, which happened to be a Hindu New Year's Day, a public meeting was held in Jallianwalla Baug in honour of the festival. It is a fact which has never been disputed, that this huge crowd which had assembled in this bottle-necked enclosure, was entirely unarmed. There was not any form of violence possible, nor was there any motive behind this meeting. It had been openly advertised and there was no mystery about it. There could be no secrecy about a meeting where some twenty thousand were present and among whom there were large numbers of women and children.

As to what followed, I quote now from Sitaramayya's *History of the Congress* which gives the authoritative Congress version "..General Dyer entered the place at the head of a force composed of 100 Indian troops and 50 British, while one Hansraj was lecturing to the audience, and gave orders forthwith to fire. His own version as given later before the Hunter Commission was that he ordered the people to disperse and then fired, but he admitted that he fired within two or three minutes of the order. In any case, it was obvious that 20,000 people could not disperse in two or three minutes specially through that narrow outlet, and when 1,600 rounds were fired,—and the firing stopped only when the ammunition had run out—the casualties were, even according to Government's version, about 400 dead, while the wounded were estimated at between a thousand and two. The firing was done by the Indian troops, behind whom were placed the British troops,—all on an elevated platform, in the Bagh. The greater tragedy really was that the dead and dying were left to suffer the whole night without water to drink, or medical attendance, or aid of any character, Dyer's contention—as it came out later—was that the city having passed under the Military, he had tomtomed in the morning that no gatherings would be permitted and as the people openly defied him, he wanted to teach them a lesson so that they might not laugh at him. He would have fired, and fired longer, he said, if he had the required amunition. He had only fired 1,600 rounds because his ammunition had run out.' 'As a matter of fact', he said, 'he had taken an armoured car but found that the passage to the Bagh would not admit it, so he left it behind'..".

What else did Dyer do ? He cut off the gas and the electric supply. He ordered public flogging. He promulgated the crawling order by which anyone wanting to cross the lane, in which Miss Sherwood was attacked, had to crawl on his belly to do so. Third class railway tickets were not allowed to be issued. Not more than two persons were permitted to walk on the pavements. All

bicycles were commandeered. A public platform for whipping was erected. It was only worthy of the days of the Inquisition. Yet to all of which came the reply "YOUR ACTION CORRECT LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR APPROVES."

What did Dyer have to say? As he sat before the tribunal of the Hunter Commission, self-assured and sheltered by the Act of Indemnity that was passed to legalize the atrocities he had committed, he was asked by Mr. Justice Rankin, the English judge from the Calcutta High Court: "Excuse me putting it in this way, General, but was it not a form of frightfulness?" It was a pertinent question from an Englishman, even though it was at the expense of British prestige. Dyer answered: "No, it was not. It was a horrible duty I had to perform. I think it was a merciful thing. I thought that I should shoot well and shoot strong, so that I or anybody else, should not have to shoot again. I think it is quite possible I could have dispersed the crowd without firing, but they would have come back again and laughed, and I should have made what I consider to be a fool of myself."

Note that reply, which for its conceit is unsurpassed by anything I have known. A horrible duty — a merciful thing — shoot well and shoot strong — and he could have dispersed that crowd without firing. Rightly then did he say and to his credit with honesty, for the man is dead now: "I wanted to crush the morale of that people." It was vengeance — red–vengeance that he was seeking.

It has been said by many who have tried to defend the action of Dyer that no one felt sorrier for it than Dyer himself. He was only performing his duty. His duty? His duty to whom? To his God? To his Christ who had said "Thou shalt not kill"? To his King and Country? To himself as a soldier? Or was it just to glorify Government House and the Officers' Mess, O'Dwyer and his own Commander-in-Chief, in whose eyes he wanted to appear a hero and not a fool? To whom did he owe that duty? Or was it perhaps that he was bringing a humanizing influence to bear on a heathen civilization?

I have heard it said that Dyer was a broken man because he was deprived of his command, and to a soldier

that is worse than the penalty of death. It may be so, but we who know little of that higher code, where to be deprived of one's command is regarded as a punishment greater than death, would have been content to have had the lesser penalty inflicted on him — the ordinary common law penalty that is inflicted on any individual, who is guilty of having committed that same offence. And when those who knew Dyer, tell us that the General was a broken man for the rest of his days, one has reason to believe that the ghosts of innocent women and children whom he shot dead in cold blood with their backs to the wall, must have haunted him for the rest of his life.

One very significant fact was that the Amritsar incidents were not known even to the most well-informed of the Congress leaders for quite some time. A strict censorship had been exercised in the Punjab. Not till a month, did the highlights of the Congress know what had happened in Amritsar, and not for some four or five months did the rest of India know. Would they have stood for that in England ?

Amritsar revealed a mentality on the part of our rulers which staggered Gandhi. It was not only South Africa that was henceforth to be his province, but India as well. Sad as he was at the sorrow of his people, he knew that the issue of freedom would have to be fought out one day and it would then be fought to a finish. Before he was acquainted with the happenings at Amritsar, he had already suspended civil disobedience. He spoke of his "Himalayan miscalculation." This remark of his has often been brought up against him. As he explained later, it was only that he had miscalculated the moment for starting civil disobedience in India. Now that the facts of Amritsar had come to light, he preferred to wait until the masses imbibed the fundamental principles of non-violence before he revived civil disobedience. His immediate aim was to teach the masses the meaning of satyagraha. With that idea in mind, he began to recruit volunteers to spread his gospel.

XI

DEEP REGRET

Towards the end of that year the Amritsar Congress was held. Motilal Nehru presided. That Congress was a landmark in Gandhi's career. The cry of "*Gandhi ki jai*" had been heard before, but Amritsar made it a household phrase. It had never been shouted so loud. It indicated the support he had rallied round him.

Two personalities came into conflict at this Amritsar Congress. C. R. Das, the Bengal lawyer, who had a powerful following, wanted to reject the Montagu-Chelmsford scheme which had just become law, and Gandhi was in favour of supporting it. It was strange irony that later, when Gandhi resolved to reject the scheme, he found the same C. R. Das on the other side. On both occasions in this Gandhi–Das controversy, it was Gandhi who triumphed. There was something in the persuasiveness of his arguments that went to the hearts of the delegates in spite of the more brilliant presentation of the case by the Bengal lawyer.

The Congress session at Amritsar was very important. The future of the Congress would be shaped on the resolutions it passed. Amritsar was uppermost in the minds of the thirty-six thousand, who attended it. It was not likely that in an atmosphere charged with such excitement and fever, the Congress would pass a resolution condemning the mob violence of the masses themselves. The delegates were, therefore, a little staggered when Gandhi brought forward such a resolution. The Subjects Committee, which scrutinised the resolutions that went before the full body of delegates, had thrown it out. It had read: "While fully recognising the grave provocation that led to the sudden outburst of mob frenzy, this resolution expresses the deep regret of the Congress at, and its condemnation of the excesses committed in certain parts of the Punjab and Gujerat resulting in the loss of lives and injury to person and property during the month of April last."

Deep regret and condemnation! These were strong words. No one had thought there was anything at Amritsar or elsewhere for which the Indian should feel deep regret. Surely it was for the Government to express this sentiment. Midst the excitement that prevailed, it was unthinkable that any blame should be attached to the masses. But Gandhi had not forgotten the murder of the Bank Manager and the burning of the bank and other buildings. That was not satyagraha and he said to those who listened to him in rapt attention, that it was impossible for him to remain within the Congress unless they recognised and concurred with his point of view. His speech was couched in simple words. No rhetoric, no flamboyance, no vitriolic outbursts against the Government. Instead, it said that we were sorry for our excesses! That in face of Dyer's slaughter of innocents, that in face also of the Crawling Order and the countless other humiliations, which the people had suffered!

It was the passing of this resolution that set the tone of the Congress. It was as if in a little pool of water was reflected the whole beauty of the heavens. Other amazing

resolutions were passed. A welcome was extended to the Prince of Wales, who was to come to India. Co-operation was offered to the new reforms. At the same time "Swadeshi" was made into something real and lifelike. The spinning wheel of Gandhi had come in the wake of Tolstoi's plough. "Do not return madness with madness," Gandhi said, "but return madness with sanity and the whole situation will be yours." It was on that note that the Congress dispersed, inspite of Amritsar, inspite of Michael O'Dwyer,* inspite of Jallianwalla Baug and the Crawling Order, inspite of all that had happened in that year. The teachings of Christ, reflected in the method of Gandhi, were thrown back in the face of the Christians, who had forgotten their religion, their civilisation, their gospel and their God.

And the year 1919 faded away.

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* As these pages go to press, I learn that Sir Michael O'Dwyer met with a tragic death at the hands of an Indian at Caxton Hall.

XII

NON-CO-OPERATION

THE NEXT YEAR SAW A STRANGE REVERSAL OF Congress politics. Das and his colleagues were for co-operation, while Gandhi was planning an all-India movement, which would paralyse the whole machinery of Government. It was to be called the non-co-operation movement.

The ground for non-co-operation was the Khilafat question, which arose out of the resentment felt in Moslem India, when the Sultan of Turkey was deprived of the Holy Land at the end of the War. Turkey had fought on the wrong side in the Great War. In the conflict which raged in the Near East, Moslems would be fighting Moslems in a purely Christian War. The Moslems of India were naturally reticent about fighting their co-religionists to glorify their Christian allies. The Moslem took his religion seriously and had the agitation in India persisted, it would have hindered the recruitment of Moslem soldiers, who formed a large part of the Indian contingents. To

appease the conscience of Islam in India, Mr. Lloyd George, that genius for making promises, assured them that Great Britain was not fighting to deprive Turkey of the sacred territory, which was under the Sultan's sovereignty. These lands — for religious reasons — had to remain under the Caliph's suzerainity, if only because that land was holy. This assurance satisfied the Moslems and they went to Turkey and fought. When the War was over, there was some sort of doubt about what Mr. Lloyd George really meant to say. Britain had gone back to its old tactics. When the day came to divide the booty, the chief victors split up that Asiatic portion of Turkey between them by making themselves the guardians of the holy land , which came under their mandate. His Majesty the Sultan was "nothing better than a prisoner."

It was too late now to save Turkey from falling into European hands. The War was over and no more soldiers were needed by Mr. Lloyd George and the Allies. The Moslems themselves could do little in India. However, when the leaders of Indian opinion met at the Amritsar Congress, they were conscious of the tragedy that had befallen the people of India. Innocent people had fallen at the hands of the oppressor. Coupled with the Khilafat grievance, it gave the Indians a chance to unite.

The great leaders of the Khilafat movement were the Ali brothers. They made an instinctive appeal to the Moslem masses, and together they mustered a following among the followers of Islam in India, which could contribute greatly to the strength of a movement which Gandhi had in mind. Gandhi saw this opportunity quicker than any one else. He had only just scored a brilliant triumph at Amritsar. The Congress had dispersed midst the cries of "*Gandhi Maharaj ki jai.*" But it had been only a Hindu cry. There was still a great part of the population of India, which was not so willing to cheer a man, who was essentially a Hindu. How much better, Gandhi thought, it would be if the whole of

India cried with one voice, whether it was his own name they shouted or that of the country as "*Vande Mataram*", or even that of the Ali brothers. It was not important whose name they shouted. But they must shout with one voice.

The Khilafat was an immediate, concrete issue, on which an appeal could be made to the Moslems of India. The issue of freedom was still vague and it did not crystalise itself in the minds of the people as this betrayal of the British Prime Minister, the symbol of our rulers, who had gone back on his word and deprived the head of Islam of his Holy Land. Mr. Lloyd George had apparently promised more than was in his power to give. For the division of Turkey was as much in the hands of France as Great Britain,. And the Viceroy, speaking with the full authority of the British Government, could now only express the "profound sympathy" of His Majesty's Government with the Moslem cause. "*Profound sympathy !* " — just to make it sound as if he meant it.

A deputation was rushed to England, but Mr. Lloyd George pointed out that the same treatment had been accorded to Turkey as to the other countries that fell in the hands of the victors. They had all been divided ! Two days later — on the 19th of March — a national mourning was decreed in India, as a protest against the treatment given to Turkey. On this essentially Moslem scene, Gandhi appeared. It was a daring thing to do. The Hindu and the Moslem did not often think alike. But Amritsar and the Khilafat question had brought them together. Yet was India ready for non-co-operation ? That was the question to be debated by the Congress and they looked to the veteran, Tilak, to help them to make this very vital decision. It is difficult now to say what Tilak would have done or said at that time. He could have caused the only real opposition to Gandhi. For it was Tilak, who first talked of Indian independence in terms of the masses and laid down a policy for the Congress, which till then was content to regard itself as a debating society. It was Tilak

the masses knew long before they knew Gandhi. Tilak was a great force in the awakening of the Indian people. But as if the fates had decreed it, Tilak passed away on the eve of the Congress session and the road was made clear for Gandhi at Calcutta. He had now only to contend with Das.

Non-co-operation became the burning question of the day. With the press at his disposal, Gandhi made sure that the delegates, who came to the Calcutta Congress were already familiar with the main subject under discussion. He did not want to spring it as a surprise on them. When they came to Calcutta the delegates had arrived at no conclusions. They were still open to conviction. They had hoped Tilak would be able to guide them when the time for decision came. But Tilak was no more and there was only Gandhi and C. R. Das, between whose arguments they had to choose.

There were many resolutions discussed at Calcutta. But it was only Gandhi's resolution they were really waiting for. It ran :

" In view of the fact that on the Khilafat question both the Indian and Imperial Governments have signally failed in their duty towards the Moslems of India and the Prime-Minister has deliberately broken his pledged word given to them, and that it is the duty of every non-Moslem Indian in every legitimate manner to assist his Moslem brother in his attempt to remove the religious calamity that has overtaken him, and in view of the fact that, in the matter of the events of the April of 1919, both the said Governments have grossly neglected or failed to protect the innocent people of the Punjab and punish officers guilty of unsoldierly and barbarous behaviour towards them, and have exonerated Sir Michael O'Dwyer who proved himself directly responsible for most of the official crimes and callous to the sufferings of the people placed under his administration, and that the debate in the House of Lords betrayed a woeful lack of sympathy with the people of India, and systematic terrorism and frightfulness adopted in the Punjab, and that the latest

Viceregal pronouncement is proof of the entire absence of repentance in the matters of the Khilafat and the Punjab, this Congress is of opinion that there can be no contentment in India without redress of the two aforementioned wrongs, and that the only effectual means to vindicate national honour and to prevent a repetition of similar wrongs in future is the establishment of Swarajya. This Congress is further of opinion that there is no course left open for the people of India but to approve of and adopt the policy of progressive non-violent non-co-operation inaugurated by Mahatma Gandhi, until the said wrongs are righted and Swarajya is established; and inasmuch as a beginning should be made by the classes who have hitherto moulded and represented public opinion and inasmuch as Government consolidates its power through titles and honours bestowed on the people, through schools controlled by it, its Law Courts and its Legislative Councils, and inasmuch as it is desirable in the prosecution of the movement to take the minimum risk and to call for the least sacrifice compatible with the attainment of the desired object, this Congress earnestly advises, the surrender of titles and honorary offices and resignation from nominated seats in Local Bodies; the refusal to attend Government levies, durbars, and other official and semi-official functions held by Government officials, or in their honour; the gradual withdrawal of children from schools and colleges owned, aided or controlled by Government, and, in place of such schools and colleges, the establishment of national schools and colleges in the various provinces; the gradual boycott of British Courts by lawyers and litigants, and the establishment of private arbitration courts by their aid for the settlement of private disputes; the refusal on the part of the military, clerical and labouring classes to offer themselves as recruits for service in Mesopotamia; the withdrawal by candidates of their candidatures for election to the Reforms Councils, and refusal on the part of the voters to vote for any candidate who may, despite the Congress advice, offer himself for election; and the boycott of foreign goods;

and inasmuch as non-co-operation has been conceived as a measure of discipline and self-sacrifice, without which no nation can make real progress, and inasmuch as an opportunity should be given in the very first stage of non-co-operation to every man, woman and child for such discipline and self-sacrifice, this Congress advises the adoption of Swadeshi in piece-goods on a vast scale, and inasmuch as the existing mills of India with indigenous capital and control do not manufacture sufficient yarn and sufficient cloth for the requirements of the nation, and are not likely to do so for a long time to come, this Congress advises immediate stimulation of further manufacture on a large scale by means of reviving hand-spinning in every house and hand-weaving on the part of the millions of weavers who have abandoned their ancient and honourable calling for want of encouragement."

That was the full text of Gandhi's non-co-operation resolution. It was a great thing to surrender titles, to refuse to attend the Government functions, to boycott the Courts of Law, the educational institutions, and foreign goods, and above all to urge soldiers to refuse to offer themselves as recruits for any service in Mespot. Gandhi had also advocated that voters should refrain from exercising their right of voting. When the division was taken, Gandhi won by a great majority. One thousand, eight hundred and eighty-six voted for him and only eight hundred and eighty-four against. He had scored another great victory in politics and he made the attention of the Government pivot round the Congress. Non-co-operation had come into being. C. R. Das, inspite of his brilliance, could not shake the popularity of this man, who was going on from strength to strength.

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If non-co-operation had come into being at Calcutta, it took final shape at Nagpur towards the end of the year. The triumph of Gandhi was even greater at Nagpur. It was not enough that he had the non-co-operation resolution re-affirmed at Nagpur. He had got his old opponent, C. R. Das, to sponsor it and when Das stood up

midst a crowded assembly to move the acceptance of non-co-operation, there was little doubt in the minds of the student of Indian politics that Gandhi had reached the summit of his career and that he spoke with the authority of the whole Congress, as no one man had done.

To describe Nagpur as a triumph for Gandhi was to under-estimate his achievement. It was not just the *coup d'état* effected by a politician. It had gone beyond the region of politics. In this land of poverty and of religious fervour, you heard for the first time of a Mahatma. It seemed as if the Soul of India was re-incarnated and it was Gandhi who was given the honour of embodying it. Across the skies was written in letters of gold: "Mahatma Gandhi *ki jai.*" It was the cry on the lips of millions of people. The cry of "Vive la France", when heard in the streets of Paris is the cry of a free people. That of "Mahatma Gandhi *ki jai*" was the cry of those, who were yet struggling to be free. Only those who have heard it know how awe-inspiring that cry is. Like the song of the Volga boatmen, it came from afar, growing louder as it approached and fading away once more in the distance.

Mahatma Gandhi ki jai !
Mahatma Gandhi Ki !
Jai !

India was on fire.

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The movement which Gandhi launched had in one of its phases struck at the root of England's prosperity. The boycott of foreign cloth hit the Lancashire textile industry — a blow which, though aimed at the capitalist class of England, struck the English working-man as well. Britain sat up and took notice of the happenings in India, when the Indian national movement began to affect its trade and to create unemployment in the North of England where there was already so much depression.

But there was also a constructive side to this boycott of foreign cloth. The Khaddar cult was something essential to Indian prosperity and to the amelioration of

the masses, which was Gandhi's primary aim. The boycott of foreign goods implied that India should become swadeshi-minded, and swadeshi was defined by him as "the spirit within us, which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote." There was, therefore, something more in it than a mere political advantage. The psychological effect was to make Indians Indian-minded and conscious of the struggle that was going on between India and her rulers. It became the symbol of the oppressed, the symbol of those who were fighting with body and soul for the liberation of their country and their people. But it was also an effort to relieve the economic distress among the masses, who, because of climatic conditions, were unable to earn a living for nearly half the year. Khaddar was a source of income to them, besides being a means of saving them from the enforced idleness of many months.

It has been said that it is an exaggeration to regard Khaddar as a means of relieving the economic conditin of India. The profits made out of Khaddar are negligible. But when you bear in mind the poverty of India and the low standard of living which has been forced on its people for many hundred years, you begin to realize what difference those few odd rupees a year make to an agricultural labourer, who has taken to the spinning wheel. If the estimate of Mr. Findlay Shirras, which is regarded by Indian experts as farthest off the mark, be taken to be the earning per head of the average Indian agricultural labourer, and which is estimated by him as approximating seven pounds a year, two extra pounds a year does seem to make an appreciable difference. And these two pounds could be made by spinning a penny-worth of khaddar a day.

There were several other reasons why hand-spinning was pre-eminently suited to the needs of India. They are to be found enumerated by C. F. Andrews in his collection of Mahatma Gandhi's ideas. As he puts it, "Khaddar is immediately practicable because it does not require any

capital or costly implements to put in operation. Both the raw material and the implements for working it, can be cheaply and locally obtained; it does not require any higher degree of skill or intelligence than the ignorant and poverty-striken masses of India possess; it requires so little physical exertion that even little children and old men can practise it and so contribute their mite to the family fund; it does not require the ground to be prepared for its introduction afresh, because the spinning tradition is still alive among the people.

"It is universal and permanent, since, next to food, yarn alone can be sure of always commanding an unlimited and ready market at the very doorsteps of the worker, and thus ensures a steady, regular income to the impoverished agriculturist. It is independent of monsoon conditions and so can be carried on even during famine times. It is not opposed to the religious or social susceptibilities of the people. It provides a most perfect ready means of fighting famine. It carries work to the very cottage of the peasant, and thus prevents the disintegration of the family under economic distress. It alone can restore some of the benefits of the village communities of India now wellnigh ruined. It is the backbone as much of the hand-weaver as of the agriculturist, since it alone can provide a permanent and stable basis for the hand-loom industry, which at present is supporting from eight to ten million people and supplies about one-third of the clothing requirements of India, but uses chiefly mill-made yarn. Its revival would give a fillip to a host of cognate and allied village occupations, and thus rescue the villages from the state of decay into which they have fallen. It alone can ensure the equitable distribution of wealth among the millions of the inhabitants of India. It alone effectively solves the problem of unemployment, not only the partial unemployment of the agriculturist but of the educated youth aimlessly wandering in search of occupation. The very magnitude of the task requires the marshalling of all the intellectual forces of the country to guide and direct the movement."

That was the great constructive argument in favour of Khaddar, which Gandhi had advanced and which immediately distinguished the swadeshi movement from any other political movement of its kind. It was not just a destructive force that he had let loose in India. He was rather building up the character of the people, even as at the same time he destroyed those forces which stood in the way of Indian progress and Indian freedom. Let us appreciate this fact, for there were many who called the non-co-operation movement the work of a madman and a maniac.

The more amazing side of non-co-operation was the enthusiasm with which it was met. Gandhi had asked for ten million men and a crore of rupees, (a little under a million pounds sterling) in order to launch this campaign. It was an exorbitant sum and in the poverty of India, it seemed as if it would never come. Money was after all only in the hands of the rich and would they part with it to cause chaos and disorder and to dislocate the machinery of commerce on the smooth working of which their prosperity depended ? Yet the money came and the men also. The word of the "Mahatma" was respected. From the most unexpected quarters came large sums of money. It staggered the shrewdest experts of finance, who had predicted that this venture would be a failure. It showed that many of those, who were living in the lap of luxury and who had all the things in life that money could buy, were willing to part with their riches for an ounce of freedom. Where all that money came from, one does not still know. It is a secret that will be buried with those who gave it. But the fact that there was so much given to launch a campaign against the Government and against the British rule in India perplexed the men in power — the Dyers and the O'Dwyers and those in high places in the hierarchy of the bureaucracy of the day, who believed that the rich would always be on their side if not the poor.

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The clouds that had gathered in the skies burst in several places. The old Duke of Connaught as an ambassador of good-will arrived in India in place of the Prince of Wales. His speech might have been a landmark in the history of India and the Empire, had it been made a few years earlier. But his words were lost in the fury of the raging storm, and his visit to India was boycotted in a way in which the authorities had never expected.

Opening the new Indian Legislatures, the old Duke said: " I have reached a time of life when I most desire to heal wounds and reunite those who have been disunited. An old friend of India I appeal to you all – British and Indians – to bury along with the dead past the mistakes and misunderstandings of the past, to forgive where you have to forgive and to join hands and to work together to realize the hopes that arise from today."

These words of his, memorable inspite of the little effect they had on India, belonged to an old world and an Empire over which Queen Victoria had presided with dignity. Then the ideals of the Indian people were different. Then they had made no sacrifice for England in the Great War. Then they were not aware of the perfidy of the British statesmen and they believed the word of an Englishman. Then they had not witnessed the blood-curdling spectacle of their countrymen oppressed in the way in which they had been now. Then too there were no Crawling Orders, no General Dyers to trample them down. His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught had made his speech too late. He made it to an India that no longer believed in the word of Britain. That faith was gone. And gone for ever.

XIII

THE TONE OF 1921

THERE WAS AT A SAME TIME A CHANGE OF Viceroys. Lord Reading succeeded Lord Chelmsford. England had spared its Lord Chief Justice to preside judiciously over the destiny of India. He announced on his arrival that he would not hinder Mr. Gandhi in his programme, so long as non-co-operation did not exhibit any violence. Gandhi gave that assurance. He even went to the extent of asking Mohamed Ali to withdraw or explain away a speech, which could be construed as being violent. The "apology" was made and there were many who thought that Lord Reading had scored an early triumph and that he had really brought the strong-hand-in-the-velvet-glove to bear on the political situation in India. In the outhouses of Government House they cried "Hallelujah."

But the clash between authority and the people had occurred in more than one place and both the Government and the people were to blame for the excesses they committed. Riots broke out all over India, in some places causing grave disturbances. They were in turn

crushed by the most ruthless measures that the Government could adopt. Crowds were fired upon in more places than one and strange as it may seem, the situation became more intolerable in those places, specially in the south, where the Congress and Khilafat workers were not allowed.

A little later, Mohamed Ali made another speech in which he said that it was unlawful for any faithful Moslem to serve from that day in the Army or help or acquiesce in its recruitment. That was a very daring thing to say and the Government began to see the seeds of sedition bearing fruit. Soon there would be open rebellion and quick measures were taken to arrest Mohamed Ali and to prosecute him at once. But the Congress under Gandhi's leadership took up the challenge. Arrest and imprisonment they had long been waiting for. Here was the moment to strike. So the speech of Mohamed Ali with all its implications was repeated from a thousand platforms and non-co-operation was once again in full swing.

Amid these happenings the Prince of Wales arrived in India with more messages of good-will. He arrived in November 1921 to show the Indian people that Britain was not afraid. Already the Duke, his uncle, had deputized for him in the August of the year before, when the new Assemblies were opened. Now came the scion of the Royal House in person. On the day he arrived there were great disturbances in Bombay. The day had been declared a *hartal* day and shops were closed, not as on days of rejoicing, but as on days of mourning. The police clashed with large crowds that were rioting in the streets and the military were called out. The people had gone mad and they did not care what happened to them or to anyone else. Here was a chance they had been waiting for and not even the persuasion of Gandhi could curb them from giving vent to their feelings. The white man had fallen from his exalted place in the heavens. The fear of God had entered his soul. A terror reigned in India. Gandhi, seeing what the people had done to his ideal of

non-violence, said and rightly: "Swaraj stinks in my nostrils."

Wherever the Prince went the reception was the most hostile. It was then that the Congress volunteers were declared illegal and on the eve of the Prince's visit to Calcutta, wholesale arrests were made. Some of India's greatest men were in gaol as guests of His Majesty. They included Pandit Motilal Nehru and his son Jawaharlal, C. R. Das and family, Lala Lajpat Rai and several others. It was like a select house-party in a political Ascot week. Only Gandhi was noticeably absent. But India knew that he would soon follow in the wake of his best friends.

There was a feeling of intoxication all over the country. Jawaharlal Nehru describes in his autobiography this feeling more accurately than I myself can. He says :

"We were full of excitement and optimism and a buoyant enthusiasm. We sensed the happiness of a person crusading for a cause. We were not troubled with doubts or hesitation; our path seemed to lie clear in front of us and we marched ahead, lifted up by the enthusiasm of others, and helping to push on others. We worked hard, harder than we had ever done before, for we knew that the conflict with the Government would come soon, and we wanted to do as much as possible before we were removed.

"Above all, we had a sense of freedom and a pride in that freedom. The old feeling of oppression and frustration was completely gone. There was no more whispering, no round-about legal phraseology to avoid getting into trouble with the authorities. We said what we felt and shouted it out from the house-tops. What did we care for the consequences ? Prison ? We looked forward to it; that would help our cause still further. The innumerable spies and secret-service men who used to surround us and follow us about became rather pitiable individuals as there was nothing secret for them to discover. All our cards were always on the table.

"We had not only a feeling of satisfaction at doing effective political work which was changing the face of

India before our eyes and, as we believed, bringing Indian freedom very near, but also an agreeable sense of moral superiority over our opponents, both in regard to our goal and our methods. We were proud of our leader and of the unique method he had evolved, and often we indulged in fits of self-righteousness. In the midst of strife, and while we ourselves encouraged that strife, we had a sense of inner peace.

" As our morale grew, that of the Government went down. They did not understand what was happening; it seemed that the old world they knew in India was toppling down. There was a new aggressive spirit abroad and self-reliance and fearlessness, and the great prop of British rule in India—prestige—was visibly wilting. Repression in a small way only strengthened the movement, and the Government hesitated for long before it would take action against the big leaders. It did not know what the consequences might be. Was the Indian Army reliable ? Would the police carry out orders ? As Lord Reading, the Viceroy, said in December 1921, they were puzzled and perplexed."

" What I admired", continues Nehru, "was the moral and ethical side of our movement and of satyagraha. I did not give an absolute allegiance to the doctrine of non-violence or accept it for ever, but it attracted me more and more, and the belief grew upon me that, situated as we were in India and with our background and traditions, it was the right policy for us. The spiritualization of politics, using the word not in its narrow religious sense, seemed to me a fine idea. A worthy end should have worthy means leading up to it. That seemed not only a good ethical doctrine but sound, practical politics, for the means that are not good often defeat the end in view and raise new problems and difficulties And then it seemed so unbecoming, so degrading to the self-respect of an individual or a nation to submit to such means, to go through the mire. How can one escape being sullied by it ? How can we march ahead swiftly and with dignity if we stoop or crawl ? "

That was roughly the feeling rampant in India when the arrests were made. Who cared? Was prison a thing to be ashamed of? It had become the hall-mark of the patriot and when they began to select the guests, imprisonment was universally coveted. No wonder the noble Lord Chief Justice said that he was a little "puzzled and perplexed." And that was the real value of this non-co-operation movement. It puzzled and perplexed the Government. It brought to a standstill the work of those who had exploited India for so many years. It strengthened the moral fibre of a people, who were weak and bent under the burden which they were made to carry. Now they fought like real men — like men who had some guts inside them. Yet no one had any clear idea what they were really fighting for. Swaraj! What did that word stand for? Did it mean the same to all those who preached it? Dadabhai Naoroji had coined the word and Gandhi had once defined it as 'self-government within the Empire, if possible — without, if necessary.' But did even the Mahatma know what it stood for? I am afraid no one knew. No one wanted to know at that stage of the struggle. Much more important was that the masses had awakened to fight for an undefined conception, which they could not quite understand, but which they knew was better than the oppression they suffered.

A critical analysis of the first non-co-operation movement may prove a little unsatisfactory to the historian of the future, if he should analyse it in cold blood, with only logic and reason. That would not be a fair criticism. History is never based on reason. It is based rather on the feelings and emotions of the men, who lived at that particular period. Nehru says: "We ignored the necessity of thought behind the action; we forgot that without a conscious idealogy and objective the energy and enthusiasm of the masses would end largely in smoke." Even so it did not matter. It was this smoke that was blinding the forces of Imperialism. In that Gandhi had succeeded beyond all expectation even though it broke

his heart to see that the Indians had forgotten all he had asked them to remember. Non-violence was completely forgotten by those who went out in the streets and rioted. Non-violence was forgotten in the excitement that followed after each firing. Non-violence, they thought, would only prolong the struggle and they wanted to take the law in their own hands and strike while the iron was hot. It was as if a tamer of wild animals had found out too late at the circus that his animals were no longer under control. And Gandhi rushed from place to place trying to preserve order. India was in such a state of turmoil that he could not be in all places where his presence was required.

An abortive effort was then made to bring the two sides to terms. It was of little avail. The Government were particularly anxious that the Prince should at least have one decent reception, but the *hartal* was more effective in Calcutta than elsewhere and even the butchers closed down, leaving the Europeans to feed themselves on tinned food. It was hardly a fitting way to celebrate the coming of their future king. Nothing could change the minds of the people now. The royal message which the Prince brought was not heard in India. The assurances of high officials were scorned at. Speeches no longer satisfied the Indian people nor did they restore that confidence, which they had lost in their rulers. The only word they might perhaps still have respected was the word of Mahatma Gandhi. He had promised swaraj within a year, and although the year was fast running out they still believed in him, yet everyone knew it could not come so soon. What greatness it must be that even failure did not shake the faith of the people in him. He had shown that he was different from all the others. His utterances were all sincere. His method was a little idealistic, but he stood by it no matter what happened. There was courage in him and a perseverance that was bound to succeed. Any child could go up to him, for he was a lovable man. He was like a new messiah that had sprung up to bring the milliennium nearer to the

people of India. He was a phantasy that walked in their midst. He was an ideal that spoke the word of God. Yet he was of the people — of the poorest among them and it brought him closer to the masses than Tilak and Gokhale. A light shone on his whole presence and in the feverish excitement that prevailed and with the Indian background of religious fanaticism, the masses felt that here was a man to be worshipped. And they worshipped him. As one looked at India one felt like asking "Quo vadis ?" Sitaramayya gave the answer beautifully, when he said ; "It must unfold itself to a discerning vision, to a pure heart, from step to step, much as the path-way in a dense forest would reveal itself to the wayfarer's feet as he wends his weary way until the ray of light brightens the hopes of an all but despairing wanderer."

Thirty thousand men were already behind bars. Thirty thousand men ! And more were going daily to join them. Gandhi was still outside. The British feared a revolution if they laid hands on this overnight saint, who was at the height of his power. They waited patiently for the appropriate moment.

One light shone brightly in the darkness of those days. It was the light of the bonfires that blazed in every city of India and which consumed large quantities of foreign cloth which were thrown into the flames by those, who were carried away by the excitement of the moment. Young men who were standing by, as children would, to see a roaring fire, took off their coats and shirts and collars and into the fire they went. Saville Row suits turned to ashes in that melting pot just as easily as did the best Sunday suits made of English worsteds and cut by a local tailor. The smart men-about-town, who had only just returned from England with a wardrobe full of fourteen-guinea suits, and who would sack their *hamals* if they did not brush their suits properly, did not think it a sacrifice to throw these same suits into the fire. Non-co-operation had got them under the skin.

Even though most of the Congress leaders were in gaol, the Ahmedabad sessions of the Congress was held as a matter of course. Gandhi read the presidential address on behalf of C. R. Das, who was in prison. But it did really matter who the president was. It was Gandhi who virtually dominated the whole policy of the Congress and guided the destiny of the nation. He had become an All-India figure of great importance and his linking up with the Ali Brothers, who were called his right and left hand, was a shrewd move to bring about that Hindu-Moslem unity which was an essential preliminary to any movement in India which was to be on a country-wide basis.

The end of the year was fast approaching. There were many people of the opinion that Gandhi should have come to terms with the Government, when that was offered, for even if Swaraj had not come by the end of that year, he would have achieved a triumph which would have appeased the impatience of India. But that was not his method. His inner voice did not urge him to make truce with the Government and single-handed, for all his best advisers were not available, he carried on the struggle.

Let us take stock of his achievements during that sensational year — 1921. He had unified a nation of three hundred million odd people. He had hoisted a national flag in a part of the Empire, where only the Union Jack had triumphantly flown. He had decreed that khaddar should be the uniform of the Congressman. He had evolved a cap which had a great political significance. He had brought about Hindu-Moslem Unity. He had shattered the smug complacency of the British raj. He had established himself in the hearts of the people. He had shown the Government the power behind him. It was not what he had done that worried the Government so much as what he could do. His word was almost law in India and the prestige of Britain staggered under the blow which Gandhi had dealt to it. He had

taught a nation self-respect. He had uplifted it morally beyond all question. Who would have dreamt that ever in India a Hindu could preach in the holy precincts of a mosque ? Or that an untouchable would be allowed to enter the temple of God ? Yet we saw this happen before our very eyes and we could hardly believe what we saw. There were only two kinds of people in India — the Indians and the Europeans — and for those few months it looked as if there had never been any communal problems or caste distinctions. And the man, who was responsible for bringing about this state of affairs, was the lone person of the Mahatma, who had risen to heights he had never expected. It was his destiny, was all one could say. No man could by his own effort consciously achieve so much. That was why the masses clasped their hands and bowed to him wherever he went. There has been nothing like it except in the days of Christ. No dictator, no great man of Europe, no King has ever had that respect paid to him. It staggered the world that a man in the twentieth century, in an epoch that came so soon after the disillusionment of the Great War, should be treated like a prophet, when in reality he was only a man.

I have seen loyal English people cheer their King. I have heard the French at the sight of the President of the Republic. I have watched dictators saluted by men in uniform. But nothing in all this could compare with the way men prostrated themselves without any compulsion or coercion before a man, who was one of them and who never wanted to be anything else. This world will have to live very long to see this phenomenon happen again.

XIV

MAN TO MAN

So 1922 ARRIVED AND GANDHI WAS RIDING ON THE crest of a wave. The scene soon shifted to the province of Gujerat where at Bardoli the question of refusal to pay taxes had come up. Gandhi had determined to offer civil disobedience on the issue of the payment of taxes, the inequities of which were beyond question. The campaign was restricted to the village of Bardoli. It was, as he pointed out, an effort to rescue the birthright of the people — freedom of speech, freedom of association, and freedom of the press.

Before launching his campaign he sent a letter to Lord Reading. It was dated "Bardoli, the 1st of February 1922." This letter is important because it explains his whole point of view. It is a historic document and for that reason, I have reproduced it in full. It read:

"Bardoli is a small tehsil in the Surat District in the Bombay Presidency, having a population of about 87,000 all told.

"On the 29th ultimo, it decided under the Presidency of Mr. Vithalbhai J. Patel to embark on mass civil disobedience, having proved its fitness for it in terms of the resolution of the All-India Congress Committee which met at Delhi during the first week of November last, but as I am perhaps chiefly responsible for Bardoli's decision, I owe it to Your Excellency and the public to explain the situation under which the decision has been taken.

"It was intended under the resolution of the All-India Congress Committee, before referred to, to make Bardoli the first unit for mass civil disobedience, in order to make the national revolt against the Government's consistently criminal refusal to appreciate India's resolve regarding the Khilafat, the Punjab and Swaraj.

"Then followed the unfortunate and regrettable riots on the 17th November last in Bombay, resulting in the postponement of the step contemplated by Bardoli.

"In the meantime repression of a violent type has taken place, with the concurrence of the Government of India, in Bengal, Assam, the United Provinces, the Punjab, the province of Delhi and in a way in Bihar and Orissa and elsewhere. I know that you have objected to the use of the word 'repression', for describing the action of the authorities in these provinces. In my opinion, when an action is taken which is in excess of the requirements of the situation, it is undoubtedly repression. The looting of property, assaults on innocent people, brutal treatment of the prisoners in jails, including flogging, can in no sense be described as legal, civilised or in any way necessary. This official lawlessness cannot be described by any other terms but lawless repression.

"Intimidation by non-co-operators or their sympathisers, to a certain extent, in connection with hartals and picketing may be admitted, but in no case can it be held to justify the wholesale suppression of peaceful volunteering or equally peaceful public meetings, under a distorted use of an extraordinary law, which was passed in order to deal with activities which were manifestly violent both in intention and action, nor is it possible to

designate as otherwise than repression, action taken against innocent people under what has appeared to many of us as an illegal use of the ordinary law, nor again can the administrative interference with the liberty of the Press under a law that is under promise of repeal be regarded as anything but repression.

"The immediate task before the country, therefore, is to rescue from paralysis freedom of speech, freedom of association, and freedom of Press.

"In the present mood of the Government of India, and in the present unprepared state of the country in respect of complete control of the sources of violence, non-co-operators were unwilling to have anything to do with the Malaviya Conference whose object was to induce Your Excellency to convene a Round Table Conference. But as I was anxious to avoid all avoidable suffering, I had no hesitation in advising the Working Committee of the Congress to accept the recommendations of that conference.

"Although, in my opinion, the terms were quite in keeping with your own requirements, as I understood them through your Calcutta speech and otherwise, you have summarily rejected the proposal.

"In the circumstances, there is nothing before the country but to adopt some non-violent method for the enforcement of its demands including the elementary rights of free speech, free association and free press. In my humble opinion, the recent events are a clear departure from the civilised policy laid down by Your Excellency at the time of the generous, manly and unconditiontional apology of the Ali Brothers, viz., that the Government of India should not interfere with the activities of the non-co-operators so long as they remain non-violent in word and deed. Had the Government policy remained neutral and allowed public opinion to ripen and have its full effect, it would have been possible to advise postponement of the adoption of civil disobedience of an aggressive type till the Congress had acquired fuller control over the forces of violence in the country and enforced greater

discipline among the millions of its adherents. But the lawless repression (in a way unparalleled in the history of this unfortunate country) has made immediate adoption of mass civil disobedience an imperative duty. The Working Committee of the Congress has restricted it only to certain areas to be selected by me from time to time, and at present it is confined only to Bardoli. I may, under the said authority, give my consent at once in respect of a group of 100 villages in Guntur in the Madras Presidency, provided they can strictly conform to the conditions of non-violence, unity among different classes, the adoption and manufacture of handspun khaddar and untouchability.

"But before the people of Bardoli actually commence mass civil disobedience, I would respectfully urge you as the head of the Government of India finally to revise your policy and set free all the non-co-operating prisoners who are convicted or under trial for non-violent activities, and declare in clear terms the policy of absolute non-interference with all non-violent activities in the country whether they be regarding the redress of the Khilafat or the Punjab wrongs or Swaraj or any other purpose, and even though they fall within the repressive sections of the Penal Code or the Criminal Procedure Code or other repressive laws, subject always to the condition of non-violence. I would further urge you to free the press from all administrative control and restore all the fines and forfeitures recently imposed. In thus urging, I am asking Your Excellency to do what is today being done in every country which is deemed to be under civilised government. If you can see your way to make the necessary declaration within seven days of the date of publication of this manifesto, I shall be prepared to advice postponement of civil disobedience of an aggressive character till the imprisoned workers have, after their discharge, reviewed the whole situation and considered it *de novo*. If the Government make the requested declaration, I shall regard it as an honest desire on its part to give effect to public opinion and shall, therefore, have

no hesitation in advising the country to be engaged in further moulding public opinion without violent restraint from either side, and trust to its working to secure the fulfilment of its unalterable demands. Aggressive civil disobedience in that case will be taken up only when the Government departs from its policy of strictest neutrality or refuses to yield to the clearly expressed opinion of the vast majority of the people of India."

I do not think that any Indian had ventured to write to the representative of the King-Emperor in such terms. There were no words like "humbly pray", no phrases like "May it please your Excellency." It was to the point, though in no way discourteous to the person to whom it was addressed. That was one thing about Gandhi that everyone has been forced to admit, for whatever may be the provocation, and however strong his case, he always presented it with dignity. He never forgot his manners.

The seven days' ultimatum had not expired, when in the United Provinces, at Chauri Chaura, where a Congress procession was on its way, mob violence took place. The crowd completely lost all sense of responsibility, and chased twenty-one constables and one sub-inspector into a police station and then set fire to it. They were burnt to death — the most disgraceful act that could have been committed. The tragedy of it was that it was committed by the Indians. That was the end, as far as Gandhi was concerned, and without any hesitation and on his own initiative, he called off the whole civil disobedience movement. His inner voice had spoken and he could not go on any longer. Gandhi had thrown in the towel, because his own side did not play the game according to the rules he laid down. He had given up the struggle when it was at its fiercest and when his chances of success were the greatest.

Why did he give it up ? Why could he not isolate this incident and make Chauri Chaura pay for the crime it had committed ? Why should India suffer for the sin of a tiny insignificant part of it ? Why should the freedom of three hundred and seventy millions be sacrificed for the

misadventure of a few hundreds? What about the sacrifices of those who were in gaol, of those who had given up their secure jobs to throw in their lot with Gandhi? What was to become of them now? Had he not betrayed their cause? And they all shook their heads, knowing that he had made the greatest mistake of his life — the greatest mistake in the history of the Indian struggle. But nothing worried Gandhi. He did not care if his political days were numbered. After all, it was his responsibility and he wanted to shoulder it in his own way.

The high officials of the Government smiled once more. They had won a most unexpected victory. Gandhi's prestige had fallen in the eyes of the people, they thought. This was their moment to strike. In the Congress Committee, Dr. Moonje had moved a vote of censure against which Gandhi did not permit anyone to speak. Nor .did he defend himself. Although the motion was not carried, there was little doubt that his stock had fallen and there was a rift in that solidarity, which was once behind him. The Government chose this appropriate moment to arrest him and he was charged with sedition. It was the 13th day of March.

XV

TRIAL

TEN O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING, IN HIS BATH, THE Mahatma heard of his arrest. He was soon ready. The whole Ashram was waiting to say its farewell and a sad gloom had come over his followers though he himself was full of high spirits. Individually he took his leave of each in turn. At his request his favourite hymn from the Gita was sung. And in the next moment he was in the company of a fellow prisoner on his way to Sabarmati Jail to await his trial. It was to take place the next day. The charge of sedition was backed up by three articles he had written as editor of his paper *Young India.* They were entitled: "*Tampering with Loyalty*", "*A Puzzle and its Solution*", and "*Shaking the Manes.*" From Gandhi's point of view, to select these three articles from among the many he had written, was to single them out for distinction, for which of his writings were not seditious ?

These articles must be examined one by one. The first was written at the time when the Ali Brothers were accused with having tampered with the loyalty of the

soldiers and which led to their arrest. In this article, *Tampering with Loyalty*, he says: "I have no hesitation in saying, that it is sinful for anyone either as soldier or civilian, to serve this Government, which has proved treacherous to the Mussalmans of India and which has been guilty of the inhumanities of the Punjab. I have said this from many a platform in the presence of seapoys. And if I have not asked individual sepoys to come out, it has not been due to want of will but of ability to support them. I have not hesitated to tell the sepoy, that if he could leave the service and support himself without the Congress or Khilafat aid, he should leave at once. And I promise, that as soon as the spinning wheel finds an abiding place in every home and Indians begin to feel that weaving gives anybody any day an honourable livelihood, I shall not hesitate, at the peril of being shot, to ask the Indian sepoy individually to leave his service and become a weaver. For, has not the sepoy been used to hold India in subjection, has he not been used to murder innocent people at Jallianwala Bagh, has he not been used to drive away innocent men, women and children during that dreadful night at Chandpur, has he not been used to subjugate the proud Arab of Mesopotamia, has he not been utilised to crush the Egyptian? How can any Indian having a spark of humanity in him and any Mussalman having any pride in his religion feel otherwise than as the Ali Brothers have done? The sepoy has been used more often as a hired assassin than as a soldier defending the liberty or the honour of the weak and the helpless. The Governor has pandered to the basest in us by telling us what would have happened in Malabar but for the British soldier or sepoy."

Later in the same article he says: "His Excellency's reference to the sedition of the Ali Brothers is only less unpardonable than his reference to the tampering. For he must know, that sedition has become the creed of the Congress. Every non-co-operator is pledged to preach disaffection towards the Government established by law. Non-co-operation, though a religious and strictly moral

movement, deliberately aims at the overthrow of the Government, and is, therefore, legally seditious in terms of the Indian Penal Code. But this is no new discovery. Lord Chelmsford knew it. Lord Reading knows it. It is unthinkable that the Governor of Bombay does not know it. It was common cause that so long as the movement remained non-violent, nothing would be done to interfere with it.

"But it may be urged, that the Government has a right to change its policy when it finds, that the movement is really threatening its very existence as a system. I do not deny them that right. I object to the Governor's note, because it is so worded as to let the unknowing public think, that tampering with the loyalty of the sepoy and sedition were fresh crimes committed by the Ali Brothers and brought for the first time to His Excellency's notice.

"However, the duty of the Congress and Khilafat workers is clear. We ask for no quarter; we expect none from the Government. We did not solicit the promise of immunity from prison so long as we remained non-violent. We may not now complain, if we are imprisoned for sedition. Therefore, our self-respect and our pledge require us to remain calm, unperturbed and non-violent. We have our appointed course to follow. We must reiterate from a thousand platforms the formula of the Ali Brothers regarding the sepoys, and we must spread disaffection openly and systematically till it pleases the Government to arrest us. And this we do, not by way of angry retaliation, but because it is our *Dharma*. We must wear *Khadi* even as the brothers have worn it, and spread the gospel of Swadeshi. The Mussalmans must collect relief for Smyrna and the Angora Government. We must spread like the Ali Brothers the gospel of Hindu-Muslim unity and of non-violence for the purpose of attaining Swaraj and the redress of the Khilafat and the Punjab wrongs."

Sedition had become the creed of the Congress! That one sentence was enough to satisfy the legal guilt of the prisoner. But seldom had he uttered so much vitriol,

this otherwise silver-tongued orator of the Congress and the Indian people. The old Gandhi of the days of compromise was not to be found in this article. Instead it was a bitter, disillusioned, one-time admirer of the British Empire that was speaking out his mind. It was also a much more powerful Gandhi, for he knew what an immense following he had in this country, where only a few years ago he was comparatively unknown.

The next of the three articles was directed against Lord Reading, who had said in reference to Congress activities that he was perplexed and puzzled. Lord Reading had gone on to ask: "What purpose is served by flagrant breaches of the law for the purpose of challenging the Government and in order to compel arrest ? " And Gandhi in his article replied: "We seek arrest because this so-called freedom is slavery. We are challenging the might of this Government because we consider its activity to be wholly evil. We want to overthrow the Government. We want to compel its submission to the people's will. We desire to show that the Government exists to serve the people, not the people the Government. Free life under the Government has become intolerable, for the price exacted for the retention of freedom is unconsciously great. Whether we are one or many, we must refuse to purchase freedom at the cost of our self-respect or our cherished convictions. I have known even little children become unbending when an attempt has been made to cross their declared purpose, be it ever so flimsy in the estimation of their parents."

The third article was more journalistically worded — "*Shaking the Manes.*" It was in answer to the threats of the late Lord Birkenhead and the same Mr. Montagu who had once before shown a spark of great statesmanship. Birkenhead had said that Britain had lost none of its "hard fibre." And Montagu had reiterated the threat in clearer language: " If the existence of our Empire were challenged, the discharge of responsibilities of the British Government to India prevented and demands were made in the very mistaken belief that we contemplated retreat

from India, India would not challenge with success the most determined people in the world, who would once again answer the challenge with all the vigour and determination at its command." And Gandhi answered: "..and if the present custodians of the British Empire are not satisfied with its quiet transformation into a true commonwealth of free nations, each with equal rights and each having the power to secede at will from an honourable and friendly partnership, all the determination and vigour of the most determined people in the world and the hard fibre will have to be spent in India in a vain effort to crush the spirit that has risen and that will neither bend nor break. It is true that we have no 'hard fibre.' The rice-eating, puny millions of India seem to have resolved upon achieving their own destiny without any further tutelage and without arms. In the Lokmanya's language it is their 'birthright', and they will have it in spite of the 'hard fibre' and inspite of the vigour and determination with which it may be administered. India cannot and will not answer this insolence, but if she remains true to her pledge, her prayer to God to be delivered from such a scourge will certainly not go in vain. No empire intoxicated with the red wine of power and plunder of weaker races has yet lived long in this world and this 'British Empire', which is based upon organised exploitation of physically weaker races of the earth and upon a continuous exhibition of brute force, cannot live if there is a just God ruling the universe. Little do these so-called representatives of the British nation realise that India has already given many of her best men to be dealt with by the British 'hard fibre.' Had Chaura not interrupted the even course of the national sacrifice, there would have been still greater and more delectable offerings placed before the Lion, but God had willed it otherwise. There is nothing, however, to prevent all those representatives in Downing Street and Whitehall from doing their worst. I am aware that I have written strongly about the insolent threat that has come from across the seas, but it is high time that the British people were made

to realise that the fight that was commenced in 1920 is a fight to the finish, whether it lasts one month or one year or many months or many years and whether the representatives of Britain re-enact all the indescribable orgies of the Mutiny days with redoubled force or whether they do not. I shall only hope and pray that God will give India sufficient strength to remain non-violent to the end. Submission to the insolent challenges that are cabled out on due occassions is now an utter impossibility."

This was the evidence against Gandhi in the lower court before the magistrate, who decided that a *prima facie* case had been made out by the prosecution and the two prisoners, Gandhi and Shankerlal Banker, were sent up for trial to the Sessions Court.

"Your Name?" asked the judge in the Sessions Court.

"Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi."

"Occupation ?"

"Farmer and weaver."

There was something very brave, almost modest, and certainly very beautiful about that reply of his, which staggered the judge, who paused to ascertain whether the Mahatma was jesting in court. But there was no trace of mockery on his face. Yet when you pause and think now in cold blood, what else could he have said ? Could he have called himself a politician ? Could he have said he was a prophet or a seer ? Could he have called himself a Barrister-at-law, when the Inner Temple soon after his conviction on a criminal charge struck his name off the rolls of that most honourable society ? His was an immortal answer, which those, who heard him, will never forget. Farmer and weaver ! In these two words he summed up his whole philosophy of life, his creed, his religion. In them we saw his vision. He had associated himself with the masses of India that day. He *was* India — that India which was made up of hundreds of millions of farmers and weavers. It was then that one began to realise the truth of the Rev. J. H. Holmes's remarks on what he calls the Christ of Today. "This man", says Holmes, "holds absolutely in his hands today the destinies

of his people. When Gandhi speaks it is India that speaks. When Gandhi acts, it is India that acts. When Gandhi is arrested, it is India that is outraged and humiliated. More truly, I believe, than any other man, who has ever lived, this great Indian is the incarnation of a people's soul." It was that soul of India that was to be found in its farmers and its weavers. Where else could it be?

Gandhi spoke slowly, clearly, emphatically. And the learned counsel turned to each other and paused and thought. One remembered at that time yet another man who some two thousand years ago stood in the Court of Pontius Pilate and whose name was Jesus of Nazareth. One felt as if another Christ — the Christ of the Aryan people — had come to stand his trial, for as he entered the court room of the Sessions at Ahmedabad some days later "the entire court rose in an act of spontaneous homage" to this frail, serene, indomitable figure in a coarse and scanty loin cloth.

I can visualise the court room in that dusty city of Ahmedabad where never such a trial was held before or since. Outside in the compound the police and the military stood rigidly at attention. A somewhat unnecessary precaution when you bore in mind the man who was being tried. It was no trial of a violent revolutionary but of a disciple of *Ahimsa*, a believer in soul force, a farmer and weaver with a flaming desire for truth.

While Gandhi took his seat in the dock, the court remained standing. Later came the Advocate General, who nodded to the prisoner at the bar. Punctually at noon, the judge, Mr. Broomfield, took his seat on the bench. The formalities of the trial were soon over, the charges had been read out, and the judge asked Gandhi whether he pleaded guilty or claimed to be tried. The Mahatma replied: "I plead guilty to all the charges. I observe that the King's name has been omitted from the charges and it has been properly omitted." Shankerlal Banker pleaded the same.

The Advocate General being deprived of the privilege of charging so distinguished a prisoner at the bar,

wanted to proceed with the trial in spite of the plea of guilty. It was a pity, he must have thought, to be deprived of such an opportunity at such a historic trial, which would go down to posterity. But the judge was adamant and merely offered to let the Advocate General make what remarks he thought fit on the passing of the sentence. Gandhi smiled in his quiet way. The Advocate General made his remarks. And the judge asked whether the prisoner would like to make a statement on the question of sentence, before he passed sentence.

"I would like to make a statement," Gandhi replied.

"Could you give it to me in writing to put it on record ? "'

"I shall give it as soon as I have finished reading it."

The judge agreed and Gandhi's voice was heard over the pinfall silence that followed.

"Before I read this statement I would like to state that I entirely endorse the learned Advocate General's remarks in connection with my humble self. I think that he was entirely fair to me in all the statements that he has made, because it is very true that I have no desire whatsoever to conceal from this court the fact that to preach disaffection towards the existing system of Government has become almost a passion with me and the learned Advocate General is also entirely in the right when he says that my preaching of disaffection did not commence with my connection with *Young India*, but that it commenced much earlier and in the statement that I am about to read, it will be my painful duty to admit before this Court that it commenced much earlier than the period stated by the Advocate General. It is a most painful duty for me but I have to discharge that duty knowing the responsibility that rests upon my shoulders, and I wish to endorse all the blame that the learned Advocate General has thrown on my shoulders in connection with the Bombay occurrences, the Madras occurrences and the Chauri Chaura occurrences. Thinking over these deeply and weeping over them night after night, it is impossible for me to dissociate myself from the diabolical crimes of

Chauri Chaura or the mad outrages of Bombay. He is quite right when he says, that as a man of responsibility, a man having received a fair share of education, having had a fair share of experience of this world, I should have known the consequences of every one of my acts. I knew that I was playing with fire. I ran the risk and if I was set free I would still do the same. I have felt it this morning that I would have failed in my duty, if I did not say what I said here just now.

"I *wanted* to avoid violence. I *want* to avoid violence. Non-violence is the first article of my faith. It is also the last article of my creed. But I had to make my choice; I had either to submit to a system which I considered had done an irreparable harm to my country, or incur the risk of the mad fury of my people bursting forth, when they understood the truth from my lips. I know that my people have sometimes gone mad. I am deeply sorry for it and I am, therefore, here to submit not to a light penalty but to the highest penalty. I do not ask for mercy. I do not plead any extenuating act. I am here, therefore, to invite and cheerfully submit to the highest penalty that can be inflicted upon me, for what in law is a deliberate crime and what appears to me the highest duty of a citizen. The only course open to you, the judge, is as I am just going to say in my statement either to resign your post, or inflict on me the severest penalty, if you believe that the system and law you are assisting to administer are good for the people. I do not expect that kind of conversion, but by the time I have finished with my statement you will perhaps have a glimpse of what is raging within my breast to run this maddest risk which a sane man can run."

The written statement then followed. It read: "I owe it perhaps to the Indian public and to the public in England, to placate which this prosecution is mainly taken up, that I should explain why from a staunch loyalist and co-operator I have become an uncompromising disaffectionist and a non-co-operator. To the court too I should say why I plead guilty to the charge of promoting disaffection towards the Government established by law in India.

" My public life began 1893 in South Africa in troubled weather. My first contact with British authority in that country was not of a happy character. I discovered that as a man and an Indian I had no rights. More correctly I discovered that I had no rights as a man because I was an Indian. But I was not baffled. I thought that this treatment of the Indian was an excrescence upon a system that was intriniscally and mainly good. I gave the Government my voluntary and hearty co-operation, criticising it freely where I felt it was faulty but never wishing its destruction. Consequently when the existence of the Empire was threatened in 1899 by the Boer challenge, I offered my services to it, raised a volunteer ambulance corps and served at several actions that took place for the relief of Ladysmith. Similarly in 1906, at the time of the Zulu revolt, I raised a stretcher-bearer party and served till the end of the 'rebellion.' On both these occasions I received medals and was even mentioned in despatches. For my work in South Africa I was given by Lord Hardinge a Kaiser-I-Hind Gold Medal. When the war broke out in 1914 between England and Germany I raised a volunteer ambulance corps in London consisting of the then resident Indians in London, chiefly students. Its work was acknowledged by the authorities to be valuable. Lasty in India when a special appeal was made at the War Conference in Delhi in 1918 by Lord Chelmsford for recruits, I struggled at the cost of my health to raise a corps in Kheda and the response was being made when the hostilities ceased and orders were received that no more recruits were wanted. In all these efforts at service I was actuated by the belief that it was possible by such services to gain a status of full equality in the Empire for my countrymen.

" The first shock came in the shape of the Rowlatt Act, a law designed to rob the people of all real freedom. I felt called upon to lead an intensive agitation against it. Then followed the Punjab horrors beginning with the massacre at Jallianawala Baug and culminating in crawling

orders, public floggings and other indescribable humiliations. I discovered too that the plighted word of the Prime Minister to the Mussalmans of India regarding the integrity of Turkey and the holy places of Islam was not likely to be fulfilled. But in spite of the forebodings and the grave warnings of friends, at the Amritsar Congress in 1919 I fought for co-operation and for working the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, hoping that the Prime Minister would redeem his promise to the Indian Mussalmans, that the Punjab wound would be healed and that the reforms inadequate and unsatisfactory though they were, marked a new era of hope in the life of India.

"But all that hope was shattered. The Khilafat promise was not to be redeemed. The Punjab crime was white-washed and most culprits went not only unpunished but remained in service and some continued to draw pensions from the Indian revenue, and in some cases were even rewarded. I saw too that not only did the reforms not mark a change of heart, but they were only a method of further draining India of her wealth and of prolonging her servitude.

"I came reluctantly to the conclusion that the British connection had made India more helpless than ever before, politically and economically. A disarmed India has no power of resistance against any aggressor if she wanted to engage in an armed conflict with him. So much is this the case that some of our best men consider that India must take generations before she can achieve the dominion status. She has become so poor that she has little power of resisting famines. Before the British advent India spun and wove in her millions of cottages just the supplement she needed for adding to her meagre agricultural resources. This cottage industry, so vital for India's existence, has been ruined by incredibly heartless and inhuman processes as described by English witnesses. Little do town-dwellers know how the semi-starved masses of India are slowly sinking to lifelessness. Little do they know that their miserable comfort represents the brokerage they get for the work they do for the foreign

exploiter, that the profits and the brokerage are sucked from the masses. Little do they realise that Government established by law in British India is carried on for this exploitation of the masses. No sophistry, no jugglery in figures can explain away the evidence that the skeletons in many villages present to the naked eye. I have no doubt whatsoever that both England and the town dwellers of India will have to answer, if there is a God above, for this crime against humanity which is perhaps unequalled in history. The law itself in this country has been used to serve the foreign exploiter. My unbiassed examination of the Punjab Martial Law cases had led me to believe that at least ninety-five percent of convictions were wholly bad. My experience of political cases in India leads me to the conclusion that in nine out of every ten the condemned men were totally innocent. Their crime consisted in the love of their country. In ninety-nine cases out of hundred justice has been denied to Indians as against Europeans in the Courts of India. This is not an exaggerated picture. It is the experience of almost every Indian who has had anything to do with such cases. In my opinion the administration of the law is thus prostituted consciously or unconsciously for the benefit of the exploiter.

"The greatest misfortune is that Englishmen and their Indian associates in the administration of the country do not know that they are engaged in the crime I have attempted to describe. I am satisfied that many Englishmen and Indian officials honestly believe that they are administering one of the best systems devised in the world and that India is making steady though slow progress. They do not know that a subtle but effective system of terrorism and an organised display of force on the one hand, and the deprivation of all powers of retaliation or self-defence on the other, have emasculated the people and induced in them the habit of simulation. This awful habit has added to the ignorance and the self-deception of the administrators.

"Section 124 A, under which I am happily charged, is perhaps the prince among the political sections of the Indian Penal Code designed to suppress the liberty of the citizen. Affection cannot be manufactured or regulated by law. If one has no affection for a person or system one should be free to give the fullest expression to his disaffection, so long as he does not contemplate, promote or incite to violence. But the section under which Mr. Banker and I are charged is one under which mere promotion of disaffection is a crime. I have studied some of the cases tried under it, and I know that some of the most loved of India's patriots have been convicted under it. I consider it a privilege, therefore, to be charged under that section. I have endeavoured to give in their briefest outline the reasons for my disaffection. I have no personal ill-will against any single administrator, much less can I have any disaffection towards the King's person. But I hold it to be a virtue to be disaffected towards a Government, which in its totality has done more harm to India than any previous system. India is less manly under the British than she ever was before. Holding such a belief, I consider it to be a sin to have affection for the system. And it has been a precious privilege for me to be able to write what I have in the various articles tendered in evidence against me.

" In fact, I believe that I have rendered a service to India and England by showing in non-co-operation the way out of the unnatural state in which both are living. In my humble opinion, non-co-operation with evil is as much a duty as is co-operation with good. But in the past, non-co-operation has been deliberately expressed in violence to the evil-doer. I am endeavouring to show to my countrymen that violent non-co-operation only multiplies evil and that as evil can only be sustained by violence, withdrawal of support of evil requires complete abstention from violence. Non-violence implies voluntary submission to the penalty for non-co-operation with evil. I am here, therefore, to invite and submit cheerfully to the highest penalty that can be inflicted upon me for what

in law is a deliberate crime and what appears to me to be the highest duty of a citizen. The only course open to you, the Judge, is either to resign your post and thus dissociate yourself from evil, if you feel that the law you are called upon to administer is an evil and that in reality I am innocent; or to inflict on me the severest penalty if you believe that the system and the law you are assisting to administer are good for the people of this country and that my activity is injurious to the public weal."

Shankerlal Banker, whose only offence was to print these articles, did not say anything about the sentence. It would have been an anti-climax after that powerful dictum of the Mahatma, in which he passed judgment on himself — once by the rules of the law of his conscience, once by the rules of an Indian Penal Code.

Broomfield said in his judgment that it was impossible to ignore the fact that Gandhi was in a different category from any person he had ever tried or was likely to try.

" It would be impossible", he went on, "to ignore the fact that in the eyes of millions of your countrymen, you are a great patriot and a great leader. Even those who differ from you in politics look upon you as a man of high ideals and of noble and of even saintly life."

But as a judge in that Sessions Court, he had to deal with Gandhi only in one capacity. It was to administer the letter of the law. "I do not presume to judge or criticise you in any other character."

Later in that same judgment, Broomfield said: " It is my duty to judge you as a man subject to the law, who by his own admission has broken the law and committed what to an ordinary man must appear to be a grave offence against the State. I do not forget that you have consistently preached against violence and that you have on many occasions, as I am willing to believe, done much to prevent violence. But having regard to the nature of your political teaching and the nature of many of those to whom it was addressed, how you could have continued

to believe that violence would not be the inevitable consequence, it passes my capacity to understand.

"There are probably few people in India, who do not sincerely regret that you should have made impossible for any government to leave you at liberty. But it is so. I am trying to balance what is due to you against what appears to me to be necessary in the interest of the public and I propose in passing sentence to follow the precedent of a case in many respects similar to this case that was decided some twelve years ago. I mean the case against Bal Gangadhar Tilak under the same section. The sentence that was passed upon him as it finally stood was a sen-sentence of simple imprisonment for six years. You will not consider it unreasonable, I think, that you should be classed with Mr. Tilak, i.e. a sentence of two years' simple imprisonment on each count of the charge, six years in all, which I feel it my duty to pass upon you and I should like to say in doing so that if the course of events in India should make it possible for the Government to reduce the period and release you, no one will be better pleased than I."

His concluding remarks were with regard to Shankerlal Banker.

When he finished, Gandhi said in reply: "I would say but one word. Since you have done me the honour of recalling the trial of the late Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak, I just want to say that I consider it to be the proudest privilege and honour to be associated with his name. So far as the sentence itself is concerned, I certainly consider that it is as light as any judge would inflict on me, and so far as the whole proceedings are concerned I must say that I could not have expected greater courtesy."

Six Years! — it was a slice out of a man's life, and yet to say in all sincerity, as Gandhi did, that he could not have expected greater courtesy! It was worthy only of a Christ.

His friends crowded round him. His wife too. It was to be his first long parting. Six years! God knows what would happen in the meanwhile. But he said his

farewells — still full of life and courage and that indomitable will, which would not yield. A car drove him and his fellow-prisoner to Sabarmati gaol. It was to seek the freedom, he had spoken of, that he was going. Six years was a long time! Six years was the note on which that great trial ended. And Gandhi was snatched away from the vortex of Indian affairs, which he had dominated so long with his personality.

XVI

THE DUST SETTLES

THAT EVENING A DUST SETTLED OVER THE COUNTRY. It was the dust that had raged like a storm over the face of India, but now the storm had died down and the dust had begun to settle. It spread itself everywhere and as the Indian watched the evening sun set and the cool of the night approach from the distance, he became conscious of a tired feeling in his limbs. The bruises on the body began to show up even from his sun-burnt skin. The dark, blue spots felt tender and sore. The body appeared to have been battered and bruised though in the heat of the moment he had hardly been conscious of the blows that were inflicted on him. Only now did he realize the magnitude of his own suffering, the oppression, which had attempted to crush him, the power and the might of those, who still wanted to maintain the status quo. In the cause of freedom, India which had been a conglomeration of varied nationalities had unified itself into a nation. Some unity of purpose had come out of a state of being which had no aim, no focus, no logical

destination. The leader of the movement was behind bars. Freedom itself was to be found in chains.

There was an ironical smile on the face of Englishmen as they sipped their chota pegs at the Yacht Club with the sea breeze blowing on their ruddy complexions. Across that vast, open, endless expanse of water — beyond the horizon — stood their England mightier than before. Theirs was the kingdom of God. Theirs too was the kingdom of man. Those who had doubted it had paid for their doubts by the long terms of imprisonment which they were made to suffer. The Yacht Club was the barometer where the feelings of the Englishmen, who mattered, were registered. Once before it had draped itself with brooms on the occasion of the departure of a Viceroy. Lord Ripon had in their opinion betrayed the cause of Britain, though in reality he had only been a little sympathetic to India. Today they rejoiced at Gandhi's incarceration in a city gaol and at the thought that they could still go on as before–lords and masters in this part of the Empire where their will reigned supreme. The Yacht Club wanted to deck itself in all the Union Jacks that were in its possession, if only for the assurance that the time for any real anxiety had not yet come.

Over India had come an ominous silence. It was too sudden and too quiet to be true. The shouting in the streets had died down. India was a little hesitant of uttering the Mahatma's name loudly on the day on which he had gone to purge himself of the sins he had confessed and committed. For he had misjudged India's readiness for the struggle and was now atoning for it with a sentence of six long years.

What of the others ? What about those who had doubted the opportuneness of calling off a struggle when it was at its height ? What about those who knew that Gandhi had thrown away victory when it was almost in his hands ? It was only now, as they pondered on the words he had spoken, that they began to understand the significance of that deeper meaning in them. Perhaps

it was wiser to pause and consider what they had achieved and what they were aiming at, instead of going on from one dubious success to another. They had come for the first time within reach of power and it was essential that they should have some constructive plans before that power came into their hands. Planning was necessary in the growth of a nation, which was struggling to free itself. That was in Gandhi's mind when he cried halt after Chauri Chaura. He wanted to collect his thoughts before plunging again into the vortex of politics, and what better place could he find for quiet thought than the secluded cell of Sabarmati Prison, with the little river in the distance and the smoke of chimneys still in the air. This then was a special moment when the progress of freedom could be viewed from a distance in its true perspective.

Yet the question uppermost in the public mind was whether the popularity of Gandhi had waned. Had he failed the Indian people in the hour of their greatest crisis? Had he deprived India of its freedom? Had he not misjudged the time to call off the movement? Would it not have been better to have come to terms with the Government a few months ago when the Government had made a gesture? And what had happened to his promise of Swaraj within a year? That would surely be left unfulfilled. These were the questions asked in India by the great majority of people, who were wavering between the Congress and British Imperialism. These were the questions to which one could find no satisfactory answers.

From Gandhi's point of view it was to clarify issues and to train the masses more thoroughly in the lessons of Satyagraha that he had called off the non-co-operation movement. He had an unerring instinct on which he invariably relied. He was not in a position to call it the inner voice. The "inner voice" had an authoritative tone about it, and "instinct" seemed to express more modestly the same idea. Whatever one called it, it was apparent that he now realized that the masses lacked discipline. So far he had relied on emotion. But was that the way to train a nation? Emotion had run away with

the movement. What Gandhi wanted to see firmly planted in the minds of the masses was a disciplined emotion, for there had always to be some ingredient of emotion so long as the masses remained untutored and uneducated. Without emotion it was difficult to stir the Indian masses. Yet too much of it may deflect them from their purpose. What was needed in India for the successful completion of the movement was disciplined emotion. Those who have listened to the music of Bach know what is meant by disciplined emotion.

To that extent, Gandhi had judged the moment correctly. The humility with which he surrendered took away the sting of defeat. He avoided that final clash, which would have crushed the national movement. A voluntary surrender meant that even though progress was terminated, the principles and the ideals, on which the movement was founded, would remain intact and whenever the energy of the people, which was now stifled in the gaols of the country, would be let loose, the struggle could be renewed with greater force. So that even those who deprecated the manner in which the civil disobedience movement of 1921 was abruptly called off in 1922, were convinced in the light of later events and the subsequent outburst of nationalism, that Gandhi did the right thing in the eventful February of that year.

At that time, however, the issue was not so clear. The Working Committee of the Congress — those who were left to function — took upon themselves in the absence of Gandhi to review the whole question of non-co-operation. It had already become clear that although Das had given his assent to Gandhi and supported non-co-operation with all his heart, he was not content to give up the struggle at the dictation of Gandhi's inner voice. Das, the shrewd lawyer and a man of reason, found another man's instinct insufficient to influence his reason. If the non-co-operation movement had ceased as far as the masses were concerned, there was no reason why the intelligensia should not carry on that struggle on a constitutional basis by seeking election to the councils

and by attempting to paralyse the machinery of government from within. That was the idea Das had in mind, in entire contradiction to the halt that had been cried by Gandhi.

Das was not alone. He carried with him some of the more influential members of the Congress, who happened to be outside the gaols. They were Pandit Motilal Nehru, Vithalbhai Patel and others. And Das scored a somewhat minor triumph, when the Congress Committee, after placing on record Gandhi's services to the cause of humanity by his message of peace and truth, reiterated its faith in the principles of non-violent non-co-operation. The idea was that after making such gestures as were necessary to preserve the prestige of Gandhi, they endeavoured to carry on the fight in spite of his expressed wish that non-co-operation should be abandoned.

Whatever excuses may be made now, it is obvious that a great section of the Congress did not see eye to eye with Gandhi at that time. It was also abundantly clear that Gandhi had not yet come to the stage when his word would, without question, be obeyed. This then was a test of his greatness. People wondered whether he was now a leader in retreat. Time alone would tell. Meanwhile, to do him justice, the Congress Committee decided to tour the country and ascertain for themselves the real state of affairs. They were to report in the August of that year and the country and the Congress would then determine which path they were to follow.

About the same time in England, Montagu swiftly passed out of the Indian scene. His resignation was brought about by his disclosure of a document appertaining to the secret Treaty of Sèvres and those, who were not so enthusiastic over his classic pronouncement four years ago, found the appropriate occasion to rid themselves of this dashing Secretary of State for India. Lloyd George too had poured oil on troubled waters when he authorized the despatch of the circular to ascertain the views of Englishmen on the question of Indianisation.

This was a *faux pas de luxe.* Those who were circulated were virtually asked whether it would be better if their own jobs were done by Indians. As if this was not enough, he made the famous "Steel-frame" speech in which he eulogized the Civil Services as being "the steel frame of the whole structure of administration." The steel frame of the whole structure of administration! How well it sounded in the ears of those English women, whose husbands were assistant collectors of some outlandish district in the jungle or on the frontier, or wherever they might have been stationed. How proud they felt to be wedded to the steel-frames of administration when they knew all along that their husbands were merely the nuts and bolts. But it was the nuts and bolts which governed India more emphatically than ever, as the silhouette of Gandhi passed through the low gates of Sabarmati gaol to serve his years of simple labour.

XVII

THE CONFLICT

THAT SAME YEAR THERE OCCURRED A SCHISM IN THE Congress. It was over the question of Council entry. A section of the Congress wanted to offer resistence through the Councils and other legislative bodies and thereby paralyse the government by offering opposition to the permanent executive which was in existence at that time. This section of opinion was led by Das and Motital Nehru, and their attitude was referred to as the Swarajist revolt. This revolt came to a head at the Gaya Congress that same year, where Das presided.

At Gaya one saw the struggle between emotion and cold, calculating reason. The orthodox school, who called themselves the No-Changers and who relied on faith and emotion, wanted to adhere to the ideals of Gandhi, whose politics were based on faith and instinct. The Swarajists, who were the rationalists, wanted to bring politics to earth from the giddy heights to which they had recently soared. And the amazing thing about Gaya was that though Gandhi was not there to defend

his attitude, there were enough men in the body of the Congress, who were prepared to stand by him in his absence. It was an astounding revelation to those who believed that Gandhi's days of leadership were over and that his popularity was on the decline. Here was a man, who had failed to give them Swaraj inside of a year. Here was a man, who had abandoned civil disobedience when only a few months ago he could have come to good terms with the government. Here was a man, who on his own admission, had committed Himalayan blunders. Even so, there was something about him that appealed to the people and they respected his word as if it was the word of a prophet. That was the moral of Gaya. Gandhi had made a lasting impression on India. Das tried to bring the delegates round to his way of thinking. Das tried and failed. Backed up by Motilal Nehru and Vithalbhai Patel, he seceded from the orthodox Congress and formed the Swaraj party. Bengal was the first province he tackled.

Das was sure of himself in Bengal. It was the province of his birth. He had made a name for himself there. Bengal would follow him wherever he went. His method of resisting authority from within the councils would appeal to the typical Bengali mind, which he knew and understood so well. Das himself was a man who shone more in a debate in the Council than on a platform in the villages. He was an intellectual. It was not the applause of the masses that he heard when he pleaded for the freedom of his country. It was rather the cheers of the men of his own type and profession — of intellectuals with a college education, of young men who knew of the existence of parliaments, who believed in democracy and constitutional government, and who had read and studied the history of the world and the struggle of humanity to free itself. It was the cheers of such men that Das wanted to hear and he knew he would not be disappointed. These were the thoughts that crossed Das's mind when after his defeat at the hands of the No-Changers, Das resigned his presidential seat at the helm of the Congress and formed

his own Swaraj party. The Gaya Congress, therefore, broke up in more senses than one and neither party was happy to see the national structure, which had stood so solidly together now begin to crumble.

Das and Motilal Nehru were the chief leaders of this Swarajist revolt. They had a following which included Subas Bose and other impressionable young men, who had found something in the plan of Das and the elder Nehru, which they could hold between their teeth and bite. To these comparative youngsters Gandhism was a vague philosophy, a religious credo, a beautiful vision and a glorious ideal, but not something they could call politics. Brought up in the school of thought, which was different from that which was responsible for the illiteracy of the masses, they preferred the hard political dogmas that came from Das and Motilal Nehru to the idealism that came from Gandhi.

The Swaraj party functioned chiefly in two places. In Bengal, Das led the revolt in the Legislative Assembly, while Motilal Nehru was the leader of the opposition in the Central Legislature, which operated at Delhi. Under their very able guidance, the Swarajists met with unusual success. Perhaps there was something in what Das said which Gandhi and his followers had overlooked. Therefore, it became more and more evident that when Gandhi returned after his term of imprisonment, he would find a great rival in the person of C. R. Das. Even as he himself was the Mahatma, Das's name was now prefixed with an equally affectionate term of endearment. It was that of Deshbandhu.

Already this Swaraj party had created deadlocks in more than one province. It had hindered the smooth working of the central legislature, by making it imperative for the Viceroy continually to exercise his powers of veto and of certification. Token cuts were made to express dissapproval of the Government's policy. The salaries of Ministers were rejected and diarchy was wrecked in several provinces. The Governor had to take over charge of the departments and ministerial government was

made almost a farce. The continual exercise of special powers made it obvious that India was being governed against her will. It did Britain little good in the eyes of the world. These were some of the facts that came to light when the Swaraj party captured the legislatures and offered civil disobedience from within. Das was not wrong in departing from the beaten track laid down by Gandhi. Moreover, this revolt against authority which took place during the years in which Gandhi was in prison, made the Indians remain conscious of the struggle. The complete cessation of civil disobedience might have made a return to non-co-operation very difficult. But side-tracked to the councils, the spirit of resistence was kept alive and though the masses did not themselves go into the Assemblies to offer resistence, they had the satisfaction of seeing the elected representatives of the Indian people carry on the struggle in a way, which made the smooth working of the British government in India a veritable impossibility.

It was about that time that Labour came to office in England and the eyes of Britain were opened by the Labour Secretary of State for India. India Office was not oblivious to the formation of the new Swaraj party and the strong constitutional opposition, which it was capable of offering. England had only recently taken to a new way of thinking and a new philosophy had been brought to light, if Socialism can so be called. It was under the influence of this more radical outlook on life that Lord Olivier stood up in that venerable House of Lords to tell the noble peers of the realm that the birth of Swarajism in India was to be traced to four cardinal facts, for all four of which Britain was entirely responsible. The first was the resolution passed by the Lords in support of General Dyer. The second was L. G's reference to the Civil Services as the steel-frame of the administration. The third was the raising of the Salt Tax against the most intense popular agitation and in direct contradiction to the vote of the Indian Legislative Assembly, in whose hands the destiny of the Indian people would one day fall.

And lastly — and this is to my mind the most important detail, though Olivier saw it only from one special angle — it was the treatment meted out to Indians in South Africa that was also largely to blame. It would have been more correct if he had called it the "injustice" meted out to Indians as a whole — in India, in Africa and even in Great Britain where they went, some to study, others for business and for pleasure, but always to suffer the bitter humiliation that was offered to the darker man. Even so, that the House of Lords should have been awakened from its noble slumber to reflect for a moment on the problems of India and the causes, which led to unrest in that far-flung outpost of the Empire, indicated the change that had come over the most orthodox of opinions.

At the same time, Calcutta, where the European community dominated commerce and industry and where Englishmen of the unrelenting type are still to be found, elected C. R. Das as the first Mayor under the new constitution. It was an event of great importance and may be compared with the election of La Guardia who came to clean up the muck and slush of American degradation. The election of Das as Mayor had almost the same significance. His term of office began at a vital period in Indian national history. He was able to carry out reforms, which no one else would have dared at that time. Khadi, which was the official dress of the Congress, now became compulsory for the employees of the municipality. Education and health became the primary concerns of the city and for the first time the municipality became an active and living force in the community — a force which was felt to some purpose by the citizens of Calcutta. Das went so far as to re-name the streets and the parks after Indian patriots of our time. It was a welcome change from the names of Englishmen, which constantly stood before our eyes. In every way, Das attempted to make Calcutta Indian-minded. Even the purchases, which the municipality made, were, as far as possible, Indian. But the *piece de resistance* was the decision of the municipality to give a civic welcome to men like Gandhi

and Nehru and those others, who in the future may happen to visit the city. This was a crushing blow dealt to British prestige in Calcutta — the first of a series, which brought the Europeans of Calcutta somewhat belatedly to their senses, for it was an astonishing fact that though the victory of the Congress had made the Englishman elsewhere realise that his presence in India was becoming more and more precarious and dependent upon the will of the Indians, the Englishman of Calcutta like Nelson, preferred to put the glass to the other eye.

Das's victory became complete at the special session of the Congress in the September of 1923, when under the presidency of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad,* a Muslim divine, who is also one of the most astute of Congress leaders, besides being one of its most brilliant heads, the Congress passed a resolution, which was a sort of compromise which would satisfy both the Swarajist revolters and the Gandhi No-Changers. The idea of this resolution was to try and cement what ever rift there might have been in the Congress since Gaya and to make it possible for both parties to remain within the framework of the Congress without causing offence. The resolution was to the effect that "Such Congressmen as have no religious or other conscientious objections against entering the legislatures are at liberty to stand as candidates and to exercise their right of voting at the forthcoming elections. And this Congress, therefore, suspends all propaganda against entering the Councils." Later, in the December of that year, when Mohamed Ali presided over the Cocanada Congress, he gave the impression that even Gandhi would not resist the idea of contesting the elections and of offering resistence from inside the councils. And even if this was a distortion of fact, for Gandhi had in a message to Mohamed Ali emphatically declared otherwise, it made it easier for Congressmen, who were wavering between rival loyalties to support the Das idea without offending Gandhi. They had seen the effectiveness of constitutional opposition.

* Elected again President of the Congress for 1940.

That was the note on which the year 1923 ended. It was clear to the nation that in the absence of Gandhi, who was in prison, it would have to choose between accepting the leadership of Das and Nehru, or wandering on its own without a leader, without a policy, without a defined goal.

Against all anticipation, Gandhi came out of gaol sooner than expected. In those two years he was content to serve his sentence without murmur and to accept the self-enforced withdrawal from the political arena. There were many, who believed that had he served the full term of six years, he would have lost that unique position he occupied in Indian politics and that in his place new mahatmas would have been born and the country would have regarded the original Mahatma as only one among many. Perhaps there was a star that guided his destiny. Perhaps he had willed that he should come out and resume the fight. Perhaps God in His infinite mercy had a plan for those dumb millions that were India. Whatever may have been the ultimate cause of Gandhi's return, he came back into headlines with a serious attack of appendicitis in the January of the new year. There was something spectacular about an otherwise ordinary illness from which anyone might have suffered. But with Gandhi it took the shape of a serious drama played at the dead of night in an operating theatre in the gaol at Poona, where against all his principles he allowed himself to be operated upon by an English I.M.S. surgeon, a Colonel Maddock, who had the honour of removing the most talked-of appendix in Indian or European history. What had happened to Gandhi, his devout followers wondered, that he should have given way to Western medical science, when he had urged so many others to be cured by fasting and will-power? What had happened to his control of mind over the body? What had happened to his faith in religion, which had now given place to his faith in surgery? Was he after all just another man? Where was that spiritual ascendancy over the body, which had earned him the name of Mahatma?

And Gandhi replied: "I plead guilty. Unfortunately for me, I am far from perfect. I am simply a humble aspirant for perfection. I know my way to it also. But the knowing of the way is not reaching its end. As I hold that my illness was a result of infirmity of thought or mind, so do I concede that my submission to the surgical operation was an additional infirmity of the mind. If I was absolutely free from egoism, I would have resigned myself to the inevitable; but I wanted to live in the present body. Complete detachment is not a mechanical process. One has to grow into it by patient toil and prayer."

In utterances such as these he gave an indication of the power that was still within him and of the depth of his philosophy. He came desperately near yogism when he talked of man's attainment of complete detachment of mind from body, a detachment which would only come gradually by patient toil and prayer. Those who have seen a fakir walk barefooted over burning coal, or a man, sealed in an air-tight compartment and sunk into the river, come out of it alive, will know what I mean. Unfortunately the idea that yogism is as much a figment of the imagination as the Indian rope trick, has made it the object of ridicule in the sophisticated countries of the West and relegated it to the sphere of sensationalism. But these things do happen in this part of the East, which has always been steeped in mystery. It is the heritage of the Indian people — a heritage that had often been spurned as superstition and laughed at by those who are not accustomed to see these feats happen. It was this power of yogism, which Gandhi was trying to acquire when he spoke of the complete detachment, which would give him that control of mind over body that was so essential to a man aspiring to spiritual ascendency.

Meanwhile, Gandhi realized that he had to be content to live in the present body and not apart from it. That was the gist of his confession. It also showed how he was prepared to abide by the laws of science until he could afford to neglect them. In submitting himself to be

operated upon by a surgeon and an Englishman at that, he had swallowed a great deal of his pride. But what pride could a man have, who had stood at the bar of human justice and submitted to the laws of man, when in his heart he knew that his was a case which was beyond the jurisdiction of the ordinary court of law and outside the sphere of law as understood and interpreted by the statutes and edicts of lesser men ? Now he was only an ordinary prisoner like so many thousand others, who had fought for the freedom of their country and had gone to gaol. A sort of resignation had come over him of late. There was his confession of a Himalayan blunder, his acceptance of the sentence passed upon him, his resignation to the complete change of policy adopted by those, who in his absence were guiding the Congress against his uttered word. And now, conscious of his mortal existence, this Mahatma, whom the people believed to be beyond reach of death, had confessed the natural, human desire to live in the present body.

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A sick man after his operation, Gandhi was released from prison. He came to a little beach outside Bombay proper where in the house of a Parsee gentleman he rested. This vast stretch of sandy beach, Juhu, was far away from the noise and bustle of the great city. Palm trees lined up in a natural curve, with the waters of the sea making a melodious roar which rose above the quiet that prevailed. Twelve miles away from Bombay, it kept at a distance those vast crowds of people, which would have thronged to see the Mahatma after his absence of two long years. In the mornings he would gently stroll over the sand with his faithful secretary, Mahadev Desai, and some of his intimate friends who came to see him. But the great crowds did not get near him.

Although it had been built upon, Juhu remained in many ways somewhat primitive. Once it was a fisherman's village and even now in the evenings, one could see the fishing nets spread out to dry and the dark shining bodies of the fishermen against the expanse of

blue sky and water. Then the clouds that trailed across would be tinged with gold, their edges aflame, but paling into a dim drab as the sun sank lower and lower into the horizon. And as Gandhi would watch this beauteous sight with the silhouette of the tall palm trees curving along the waterfront, the memory of those long days in the narrow precincts of the city gaol would die down and the bitterness within him would mellow. Then he would feel as if there was no word like sorrow, and the disillusionment, which might have worried him, at the thought of some of his trusted friends parting from him on vital issues, would no longer cloud his life. Weak though he was, he still retained that gentleness, which one had learnt to associate with him. Juhu brought out the best that was in Gandhi. It was the right setting for his temperament. Clad as he was in his simple khaddar shawl and in sharp contrast to the elaborate colour scheme of nature, his powerful personality by its sheer simplicity emerged from the richness of the colours to draw the attention of the stray passer-by. Nothing could obscure him, not the fury of the gods nor even the beauty of nature.

It was at Juhu, amidst such surroundings that Das and Nehru came to their one-time undoubted chief, who had unexpectedly returned from prison. They had differed from him on a question of policy. Aware as they were of the success of the Swarajist movement, a sense of loyalty to Gandhi made them go to him to see if they could change him to their way of thinking. Gandhi had been released unconditionally, and there were no fetters to his future conduct in politics, except the enfeeblement of his body. But he thought that immediate participation in the political struggle would be inconsistent with the calling-off of the non-co-operation movement. This attitude he maintained when Das and Nehru arrived at Juhu to pay their respects. Whatever may have been the difference in their methods, fundamentally they still stood for the same thing. There was never any question of doubt as to their ultimate goal, and in speaking of the Swarajist "revolt", it is necessary to stress that it was not

in ideals, nor in aim that these two factions of the Congress differed, but in the method they should adopt. They both saw the same vision of a free India. Both stood as firmly for the liberation of the Indian people. Both regarded the British connection as detrimental to Indian interests — perhaps Gandhi was a little more tolerant. Both knew that the salvation of the country depended on the attainment of complete self-government. It was only on the question of Council entry and participation in the legislative assemblies of the country that they differed and it was a pity that because of this difference of method the followers of Das and Nehru should have called themselves the "Swarajists" and those of Gandhi the "No-Changers." To the casual observer of Indian politics it gave the impression that these two parties were working at cross-purposes and that the No-Changers were satisfied with the *status quo*, which was far from true. It was perhaps a little unfortunate that so early in the day, the most important members of the Congress could not see eye to eye on a question of method and policy.

The conversations that took place at Juhu cleared the air, and the tension, which the country felt over this so-called "split" in the Congress, was relieved when Gandhi adopted the attitude of live and let live. With his usual tact he was able to reduce this split to its very minimum, and he came out of the Juhu conversations a man with a larger heart. One could not help feeling that the Mahatma was also a diplomatic realist. His statement after his talk with Das and Nehru bore evidence of that. In that he said :

"After having discussed with Swarajist friends, the vexed question of entry into the Legislative Assembly and the Councils by Congressmen, I am sorry to have to say that I have not been able to see eye to eye with the Swarajists. I assure the public that there has been no lack of willingness or effort on my part to accept the Swarajist position. My task would be much simpler if I could identify myself with it. It can be no pleasure to me to oppose, even in thought, the most valued and respected

leaders, some of whom have made great sacrifices in the cause of the country and who yield to no one in their love of freedom of the motherland; but in spite of my effort and willingness, I have failed to be convinced by their argument. Nor is the difference between them and myself one of mere detail. There is an honest and fundamental difference. I retain the opinion that Council-entry is inconsistent with non-co-operation, as I conceive it. Nor is the difference a mere matter of interpretation of the word 'non-co-operation' but relates to the essential mental attitude resulting in different treatment of vital problems. It is with reference to such mental attitude that the success or failure of the triple boycott is to be judged, and not merely by a reference to the actual results attained. It is from that point of view that I say that to be out of the legislative bodies is far more advantageous to the country than to be in them. I have, however, failed to convince my Swarajist friends, but I recognise, so long as they think otherwise, their place is undoubtedly in the Councils. It is the best for us all.... The question, therefore, before the country is not an examination and distribution of the merits of the Swarajist view and mine. The question is, what is to be done now regarding Council-entry as a settled fact? Are the non-co-operators to keep up their hostility against the Swarajist method, or are they to remain neutral and even help wherever it is possible or consistent with their principles? The Delhi and Cocanada resolutions have permitted those Congressmen who have no conscientious scruples to enter the Councils and the assembly if they wanted to. In my opinion, the Swarajists are, therefore, justified in entering the legislative bodies and in expecting perfect neutrality on the part of the No-Changers. They are also justified in resorting to obstruction, because such was their policy, and the Congress laid down no condition as to their entry. If the work of the Swarajists prospers and the country benefits, such ocular demonstration cannot but convince honest sceptics like me of our error, and I know the Swarajists to be patriotic enough

to retrace their steps when experience has disillusioned them. I would therefore be no party to putting any obstacles in their way or to carrying on any propaganda against the Swarajists' entry into the Legislatures, though I cannot actively help them in a project in which I do not believe. The purpose of the Delhi and Cocanada resolutions was to allow the Swarajists a chance of trying the method of Council-entry and that purpose can be served only if the 'no-changers,' with scrupulous honesty, allow the Swarajists full liberty to pursue their programme in the Councils, unfettered by any obstruction from them. During the state of probation, I should advise the No-Changers not to worry about what the Swarajists are doing or saying, and to prove their own faith by prosecuting the constructive programme with undivided energy and concentration. Khaddar and National Schools are enough to occupy every available worker who believes in quiet, honest and undemonstrative work. The Hindu-Muslim problem too will tax the best energy and faith of the workers. The No-Changers can justify their opposition to Council-entry, only by showing the results of their application to the constructive programme, even as the Pro-Changers must justify their entry by results. The No-Changers are in one respect in an advantageous position, for they can secure the co-operation of the Pro-changers. The latter have declared their faith in the constructive programme, but their contention is that, by itself, the constructive programme cannot enable the country to reach the goal. In the prosecution, however, of the constructive programme outside the Legislatures, all — No-changers, Pro-changers and others,— can, if they will, work in union through their respective organisations, if necessary."

It is not possible to pass over this statement of Gandhi's without some comment. It seems to sum up so perfectly his attitude, his character, his faith, his position at the time when he came out of prison to inaugurate the new era in Indian politics in general and in the Congress in particular. There was also in this statement a clear

and definite exposition of his idea of non-co-operation. It was, as he put it, an essential mental attitude resulting in different treatment of vital problems. So that in his attitude to Satyagraha he had not changed one jot. And he was now fighting for a fundamental principle not only of Congress politics, but of his own life. If the freedom of the Indian people is to be fought with the weapon of soul force, which he had introduced, then he was entitled to interpret it in his own way. But he was willing to stand out of the way to let others experiment. He was willing to concede the Swarajists a victory if they achieved one. He accepted Council-entry as a fact. He was not trying to obstruct those who had already gone into the fray. But he would not give the Swarajists his benediction, for they had strayed from the fold and he could hardly be expected to support them in the face of his deeper conviction and the convictions of those, who followed him wherever he would lead them. There was also something modest about this statement of his. It was devoid of anything spectacular. It was in a different vein from his statements in court or his messages to the nation. "Khaddar and National Schools are enough to occupy every available worker who believes in quiet, honest and undemonstrative work." These were words which expressed that resigned frame of mind in which one found him. But he was resigned to his fate — to follow the plan which he knew God had made for him and which he knew would one day reveal itself. It was in moments like these that one saw him retire into his self, taking refuge in his God and in his soul. The halo round his head shone more brightly in the eyes of those who believed in him, even as it was completely lost from the sight of those who were wavering in their allegiance. He became quieter and was often steeped in prayer. He lived by himself in a world of his own, waiting for the inner voice to urge him on to greater and better things. He was not the man to force the pace against the plan of fate, against the expressed will of some of his most trusted followers, against the echo of his own inner voice.

And yet one could not help noticing the sadness within him at the crumbling of a structure he had so carefully erected. Solidarity within the Congress, unity between Hindus and Muslims — these were not to be achieved so easily midst the perpetual conflict of Indian communities. And as he walked along the sandy beach at Juhu, his heart wept for the things that were no more. He knew that in his absence and as a result of the oppression inflicted on the Congress this organization had gone to pieces. One day he would take the scattered bricks and build again, but in the process of rebuilding he would have to be more careful in the selection of materials, and more sure of his foundations. There was work ahead for him, but in the enfeebled state of his mind and body, he could not cope with it yet.

Das and Nehru remained equally firm. The lawyers had not budged an inch. The views expressed by Gandhi in the course of the conversations and those embodied in the statement had been considered by them "with the care and attention due to his great personality", but, with all the reverence they entertained for him and his opinions, they remained "unconvinced by his reasoning". They did not see how Council-entry was inconsistent with non-co-operation, but if non-co-operation was more a matter of mental attitude than of the application of a living principle to the existing facts of our national life, with special reference to the varying attitude of the bureaucratic government which rules that life, they conceived it to be their duty to sacrifice even non-co-operation to serve the real interests of the country. That was the attitude of Das and Nehru and one wondered at that crucial stage of the struggle, whether in the end it would be their voice that would be heard over India, or whether the three hundred and seventy millions would find their salvation in the message of Gandhi. It was too early to tell.

XVIII

AND AFTER

THE YEAR HAD NOT PROGRESSED VERY FAR, WHEN as a result of unrest, communal riots broke out all over India. The brunt of the rioting fell on Kohat, which was strangely a military out-post on the North-West Frontier. There were riots in other places too. At Lucknow, Allahabad, Delhi, Shahjahanpur, Nagpur, Gulbarga. The dead and the wounded at Kohat totalled four thousand. Disturbed by the out-break of these communal riots, Gandhi decided to fast for twenty-one days. It was to be a penance because he felt he was to blame for this outbreak of violence. He had created in India a spirit of restlessness without first having educated the people sufficiently to observe non-violence. The decision to fast, following so soon after his serious illness was somewhat dangerous. It was hardly the time for such an ordeal and his body could not be made to offer the necessary resistance. But he had determined to overcome the infirmity of body by will-power and an anxious people watched him begin his fast in the house of Mohamed Ali at Delhi.

Those were twenty-one breathless days, with the whole country anxiously looking on. A single man had by his own voluntary action caused anxiety to a whole nation. He had of his own accord brought about a condition, which, though not critical, was often serious. He need not have fasted. He need not have chosen so weak a condition in which to undergo the ordeal of a twenty-one days' fast. And yet when you look at it from Gandhi's point of view, his decision to fast was to be traced to the events that happened in India — the outbreaks of violence, the communal riots, the destruction of life and property which was committed by others and for which he felt responsible. It was not merely to appease his conscience that he underwent that gruelling ordeal. It would be an easy way for man to square himself with his God, if by fasting was understood the mere abstinence from food. But with Gandhi it was more than that. It was the purification of the soul as much as of the body. It was the feeding of the soul at a time when the body was denied food. That was the essence of Gandhi's fasts.

This idea is perhaps best expressed in an editorial article in *Young India*, written by Rev. C. F. Andrews, and quoted extensively in Indian papers throughout the country. It runs as follows :—

"At the foot of the Ridge at Delhi, on the farther side away from the city, is a house called Dil-khush, or Heart's Joy, where Mahatma Gandhi has been keeping his fast. Above the house stands out the historic Ridge itself with its crumbling ruins telling of many battles in days gone by. A "Mutiny Memorial" stands at its highest point.

"From the terrace on the upper story of Dil-khush there can be seen ruined buttresses and walls, and not far away from them Asoka's Pillar points its finger to the sky. In the darkness of the night these landmarks stand out in the starlight and against the moon. Between the Ridge and the house below, where Mahatma Gandhi lies in silence day by day, suffering and exhausted, lines of

motor-cars in the Delhi season block the road each afternoon, while the golfers play their rounds of golf.

"Mahatma Gandhi had called me to the terrace one afternoon. Some musicians had come, and he wished me to hear the music. It was one of his worst days; his weakness was extreme. A boy was singing softly at the far end of the terrace. As I passed in order to sit down and listen to the music, I could not but take note how drawn the face of the sufferer was with pain. The sight renewed my anxiety, and at first I hardly listened to the music. The sun was setting in the west, and shafts of light were pouring from it, piercing the open glades where the golfers were busily playing their rounds of golf. The rocks and ruins on the hill-top were flushed with crimson and gold.

"At last the beauty of the sky arrested me and soothed my inner fears; and then, as I looked towards the Ridge, there appeared to come before my imagination the whole story of the past. That Pillar, with its edict of toleration and non-violence, brought to my mind the Buddhist Age and the saintly King Asoka. The people of the land in those days were kindly and tolerant towards man and beast. It was an age of peace.

"But those fortress ruins with the Mutiny Memorial told me of another chapter in human history, filled with bloodshed and bitter strife. On that evening the sun was setting peacefully in the west; but all through the previous night the Ridge had been lashed by rain and tempest, and the winds had fiercely raged. The thunder had rolled along its sides and echoed in its rocks and hollows, and the jagged lightning had played against its summit. Even so, in Indian history the calm beauty of those peaceful days of King Asoka had been followed by the storm-swept days of war. Last of all, in the Mutiny, the Ridge had been stained with human blood and scarred by shot and shell.

" Below the summit of the Ridge, in the open spaces where the modern golf links had been made, I watched the golfers come and go. The clubs were swung and the balls

were hit; muscular men and women marched forward, while little boys carried their golf clubs behind. Physical activity was there in every limb — physical and temporal power.

"Instinctively my gaze turned back to the frail, wasted, tortured, spirit on the terrace by my side, bearing the sins and sorrows of his people. With a rush of emotion there came to memory the passage from the Book of Lamentations–'Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold and see, if there is any sorrow like unto my sorrow.' And in that hour of vision I knew more deeply, in my own personal life, the meaning of the Cross."

One good thing came out of this decision to fast. Leaders in all parts of India took this opportunity to unite and to respect freedom of conscience and religion and thereby to do away with the root of the trouble, for the origin of all communal rioting was to be traced to an intolerance on the part of one community to allow the other to indulge in its religious practices. The Hindu objected to cow slaughter by the Mohamedan because the cow was in Hindu religion a sacred animal. And the Mohamedan came rushing out of his mosque, knife in hand, to draw blood from those, who played music so near his place of worship. All this seems so futile when you consider the slaughter of innocents which it involved. It was, therefore, to set an example in self-sacrifice that Gandhi had fasted, for was not all toleration based on the idea of sacrifice? And he succeeded, for the Unity Conference, which met as a result of his fast, attempted to bring about some harmony between these two major factions in the Indian people. Perhaps the future of India will depend upon the successful intermingling of these two conflicting and opposing cultures — the one cold, ascetic, passionless and vegetarian; the other passionate, full-blooded and fanatic. The fusion of these two strains may give India the generation of men, who will be unable to think in terms of communities or isolated religions or superstitions or beliefs. But such a fusion,

which can result from mixed marriages and an abating of strong religious allegiances is not so easily possible in a country where orthodoxy is supreme and unchallenged and where religion, whatever form or shape it may take, is the very life-blood of the nation. Nor has Gandhi at any stage of his life suggested this more scientific and biological way out of the communal tangle. Too much the man of religion, too much the devout Hindu, the Modh Bania, too staunch a believer in Jain philosophy, in non-violence and in the abstinence from taking all life, he could not possibly be the advocate of inter-marriage and mixed-breeding. Nor would he have adhered himself to the Indian people if he had uttered such heresies. And inter-marriage in India can always only remain a heresy.

But to return to the conference. It drew to itself members from all communities, and the Lord Bishop of Calcutta, Dr. Foss Wescott, gave it the benediction of the Christian Church. But the masses were as far apart as ever. It was only the leaders that had met. The temperament of the people was not conducive to religious toleration in spite of their devotion to Gandhi. Therefore, some believed that the fast benefitted no one, for the communal question still remained the burning problem of a country unable to find a way of overcoming its internal dissension. And every day that news arrived of the outbreak of communal rioting, the men in authority in the Government Houses in India and the offices in Whitehall knew that they could with the help of His Majesty's forces hold out longer against the Indian people than they could against an India that was united in its struggle for freedom. Such set-backs were natural in the progress of any movement and the Indian national movement was no exception. And so faded into the background the twenty-one days' fast and the Unity Conference, and Gandhi devoted his energy once more to the active domination of the Congress of which he was elected President at the end of the year.

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To be the President of the Congress was for Gandhi no great achievement. Lesser men had filled that office before him. That was not material. He had virtually dominated the policy of the Congress long before its session at Belgaum in the December of 1924, when he formally accepted the role of President. Perhaps it was because his power over the Indian people was at that time at its lowest that he accepted that office. Subsequently we have seen a number of Congress Presidents, who have almost been made by him. He was a President-maker, even as in the early days of English history there were the king-makers. Gandhi has since been the power behind the Presidential throne, but in 1924 he was not so sure of himself. The independent attitude adopted by Das and Nehru left him to lead that body of men who had followed the Congress from their secure jobs into the wilderness of non-co-operation. So he had gone back to preside over the Congress — but it was a Gandhi who was no longer fighting, no longer on the offensive, but a Gandhi who was waiting, waiting,, waiting.

His presidential speech was characterized by his inner resignation. For the sake of his principles and for a certain consistency in his political philosophy he had given up the outer struggle. He knew that India was not in a frame of mind to fight for its freedom in the way in which he would have it fight. So he preferred that it should not fight at all. Politics seemed furthest away from his mind as he read his message to the delegates who assembled at Belgaum, through whom he hoped to touch the hearts of the people. He wanted that they should learn first that contentment and self-sufficiency which was inspired by the spinning wheel. This message was, as it were, emblazoned on his coat of arms, no longer couchant, but rampant. The spinning wheel implied the continuance of the boycott of foreign cloth, and this was the only form of boycott that was maintained after the discontinuance of the civil disobedience movement. All other forms of boycott were suspended.

It had been said that the spinning wheel was not exciting enough, that it was an occupation only for women, that it meant a return to the middle ages and that it was a vain effort against the majestic march of scientific knowledge for which machinery stood. To this Gandhi said: "In my humble opinion, India's need is not excitement but solid work." It was this realization, following in the wake of the excitement of non-co-operation, that characterized his attitude on his return from prison. He had not cried halt in vain, for he knew that even so a certain amount of damage had already been done. As Gandhi said in his Presidential address : "Though, not a single boycott was anywhere near completion, every one of them had undoubtedly the effect of diminishing the prestige of the particular institution boycotted. The most important boycott was the boycott of violence. Whilst it appeared at one time to be entirely successful, it was soon discovered that the non-violence was only skin-deep. It was the passive non-violence of helplessness, not the enlightened non-violence of resourcefulness. The result was an eruption of intolerance against those who did not non-co-operate. This was violence of a subtler type. In spite, however, of this grave defect, I make bold to say that the propaganda of non-violence checked the outbreak of physical violence, which would certainly have broken out, had not non-violent non-co-operation come into being. It is my deliberate conviction that non-violent non-co-operation has given to the people a consciousness of their strength. It has brought to the surface the hidden powers in the people of resistance through suffering. It has caused an awakening among the masses which perhaps no other method could have."

"Though, therefore, non-violent non-co-operation has not brought us Swaraj, though it has brought about certain deplorable results and though the institutions that were sought to be boycotted are still flourishing, in my humble opinion, non-violent non-co-operation as a means of attaining political freedom has come to stay and that even its partial success has brought us nearer Swaraj.

There is no mistaking the fact that the capacity for suffering for the sake of a cause must advance it."

That was all he said reviewing the events of the past. He was not going to trace the chequered career of the non-co-operation movement. It was more with the reasons why it had to be withdrawn that he was concerned.

"We are faced with a situation that compels us to cry halt. For whilst individuals hold firmly to their belief in non-co-operation, the majority of those who are immediately concerned, have practically lost faith in it, with the exception of boycott of foreign cloth. Scores of lawyers have resumed practice. Some even regret having ever given it up. Many who had given up Councils have returned to them and the number of those who believe in Council-entry is on the increase. Hundreds of boys and girls who gave up Government schools and colleges have repented of their action and have returned to them. I hear that Government schools and colleges can hardly cope with the demand for admission. In these circumstances these boycotts cannot be worked as part of the national programme, unless the Congress is prepared to do without the classes directly affected. But I hold it to be just as impracticable to keep these classes out of the Congress as it would be now to keep the non-co-operators out. They must both remain in the Congress without either party interfering with or hostilely criticising the other. What is applicable to Hindu-Moslem unity is, I feel, applicable to the unity among different political groups. We must tolerate each other and trust to time to convert the one or the other to the opposite belief. We must go further. We must plead with the Liberals and others who have seceded to rejoin the Congress. If non-co-operation is suspended, there is no reason why they should keep out. The advance must be from us, Congressmen. We must cordially invite them and make it easy for them to come in."

Those were not words one would have heard from the lips of a fighting Gandhi. It was a Gandhi who was conscious of a saturation in human suffering and of

the limitations of human nature. He knew that on future occasions when the novelty of civil disobedience had died down, he would not be able to count on the hordes of young men and women who left their schools and colleges, their occupations, their work, their profession, to throw in their lot with him in the cause of freedom. The heat of the moment could not be expected to recur too often and what would count in the long run was cool, calculating thought and solid work, which the Congress must put in before it resumed the struggle for freedom. He was also conscious of the increase in the number of those who preferred the intellectual leadership of Das and Nehru to his own inspired and more religious guidance. The followers of Islam too, now that the Khalifat question no longer existed, preferred to return to their own communal camp rather than follow the banner of an essentially Hindu leader who had retreated. And the Liberals, who in India bore out the truth of the maxim that the *via media* was the last refuge of indecision, knew that in the immediate future it would be to their advantage to pay homage to Government House. The pity of it was that Gandhi was wanting to invite them cordially and to make it easy for them to come into the Congress. What had happened to the Mahatma? Some of his devoutest followers wondered.

But his presidential address was not without its brilliant flashes. He had for the first time in a Congress presidential address dealt a blow to Hindu orthodoxy from which it was difficult for it to recover. The great caste machine on which Hindu society was built bore the brunt of his attack, when he said that untouchability was another hindrance to Swaraj. "It is," he went on to say, "an essentially Hindu question and Hindus cannot claim or take Swaraj till they have restored the liberty of the suppressed classes. They have sunk with the latter's suppression. Historians tell us that the Aryan invaders treated the original inhabitants of Hindustan precisely as the English invaders treat us, if not much worse. If so, our helotry is a just retribution for our having created an

untouchable class. The sooner we remove the blot, the better it is for us, Hindus. But the priests tell us that untouchability is a divine appointment. I am certain that the priests are wrong. It is a blasphemy to say that God set apart any portion of humanity as untouchable. And Hindus, who are Congressmen, have to see to it that they break down the barrier at the earliest possible moment. The Vaikom satyagrahis are showing us the way. They are carrying on their battle with gentleness and firmness. They have patience, courage, and faith. Any movement in which these qualities are exhibited becomes irresistible. I would, however, warn the Hindu brethren against the tendency, which one sees now-a-days, of exploiting the suppressed classes for a political end. To remove untouchability is a penance that caste Hindus owe to Hinduism and to themselves. The purification required is not of untouchables but of the so-called superior castes. There is no vice that is special to the untouchables, not even dirt and insanitation. It is our arrogance which blinds us, 'superior' Hindus, to our own blemishes and which magnifies those of our down-trodden brethren whom we have supressed and whom we keep under suppression. Religions, like nations, are being weighed in the balance. God's grace and revelation are the monopoly of no race or nation. They descend equally upon all who wait upon God. That religion and that nation will be blotted out of the face of the earth which pins its faith to injustice, untruth or violence. God is Light, not darkness. God is Love, not hate. God is Truth, not untruth. God alone is Great. We, His creatures are but dust. Let us be humble and recognise the place of the lowliest of His creatures. Krishna honoured Sudama in his rags as he honoured no one else. Love is the root of religion or sacrifice and this perishable body is the root of self or irreligion, says Tulsidas. Whether we win Swaraj or not, the Hindus have to purify themselves before they can hope to revive the Vedic philsophy and make it a living reality."

No one after reading this denunciation of Hinduism and its prejudices, could say that Gandhi's religion was founded on the narrow interpretations of caste. The priestly class, if asked their opinion of Gandhi as a Hindu, would have denounced him on this speech alone. For what was left to them of Hinduism once you abolished caste and you took away from the Brahmin the right to shun the untouchable? That was the question asked by many a Hindu priest, who depended for his livelihood upon the existence and the maintenance of these caste differences and on the retention of superstitions as part of the essential ceremonial for the practice of a religion in which he traded. Gandhi had little to lose by being denounced by the high-priests of caste. Once before he had shown his utter indifference to the voice and authority of the caste-machine, when he left for England to study for the Bar. And if he could afford to neglect the opinion of the caste elders at so early an age in his life, it was not likely that he would worry about it now. Untouchability was too obvious a blot on Hinduism and he knew that enlightened opinion would always be on his side.

Yet all this was only social reform. The spinning wheel, Hindu-Muslim unity, the abolition of untouchability, were hardly politics. Perhaps the boycott of foreign goods might have fallen under the latter head, but even this could more correctly be classified as economics. Politics, therefore, had to be touched upon in his presidential address, unwilling as he was to do it. He was not going to make any revolutionary utterance or any impossible promises. Gandhi, the politician, had quietened down. He was now concentrating more on the means of attaining freedom than the end itself and he knew that the spinning wheel, Hindu-Muslim unity and the removal of untouchability were only the means to his end. What was this end? He himself was content to know the means, for means and end were convertible terms in his philosophy of life, but it was the people, who wanted to know the end, not vaguely but precisely. It was only

right that they should know the full implication of Swaraj. So they asked: What is Swaraj ? What did it stand for ? What would it bring to the people, who fought for it ? What was in short to be the end of it all ?

And Gandhi gave his answer. By Swaraj he meant the attainment of a state in which the franchise would be regulated on the basis of manual work and would not be dependent on property or position, where ruinous military expenditure which was only indulged in for the sake of Imperial defence, would be curtailed to the proportion necessary for protection of life and property in normal times, where the administration of justice would be cheapened, where revenues from intoxicating liquors and drugs would be abolished, where the salaries paid to the members of the Civil and Military Services would be brought down to a level compatible with the general condition of the country, where there would be a redistribution of provinces on a linguistic basis with as complete autonomy as possible for every province for its internal administration and growth, where all arbitrary powers would no longer be in existence, where the highest post would be open to all who may qualify for it, where there would be complete recognition of religious freedom and mutual forbearance in the case of a possible conflict, where the official language of a province would be the vernacular of the province, and where English would only be used for international diplomacy. That was to be the Swaraj of Mahatma Gandhi. Yet even in this Indian paradise, for whose extravagance he apologized, and at which he hoped they would not laugh, he had conceded to the princes their sovereign rights and had given to the foreigner the fullest guarantee of all vested interests justly acquired, after the examination of such monopolies by an investigating commission.

Something must be said about his somewhat meek attitude towards the preservation of the British connection. "I would," he said, "strive for Swaraj within the Empire, but would not hesitate to sever all connection, if severance became a necessity through Britain's own fault. *I thus*

throw the burden of separation on the British people." The italics are my own. These words are too disappointing to be left unnoticed and I would rather I admitted my disappointment than that those who may snoop through these pages should spot them out for themselves. It is difficult even for the most sympathetic of biographers to gloss over a statement like this. It had by now become abundantly clear that if anyone desired the severance of the British connection it was the Indian and that the Englishman would fight to the bitter end to guard this heritage, which he had acquired through the spirit of adventure and the enterprise of the men who went to trade in strange lands in the days of the John Company, of Clive and Hastings and others like them, who brought this treasure to adorn the Imperial crown. There could never be any question of separation in the Englishman's mind. That would be an acknowledgement of defeat, the most bitter humiliation such as Great Britain has not yet known. More easily in the Rome of Nero might the slave have asked his master to leave the forum. It was not in vain that a little urchin at a street corner, leaning against a sooty wall and wondering why the blue sky was so far away, sang to the accompaniment of the barrel organ, the refrain of "Rule Britannia." Britons never, never shall be slaves ! How could Gandhi under such circumstances believe that "it should rest with Britain to say that she will have no real alliance with India."

What had happened to the man who had seen Amritsar turned into a slaughter house, who had heard the evidence of Dyer, and who had with his own eyes seen such repression as would horrify the most cold-blooded amongst us ? Could there ever be a real alliance between two peoples whose interests conflicted at every stage of their mutual association ? Could there be any real friendship between two such widely opposed ideals — the ideal of self-government on the one hand and that of colonial expansion on the other ? At moments like these he was straining too much that faith he had in the English people. Or was this a leader in retreat ?

June 1925 — and the great Das died. Deshbandu had passed away. Lawyer, politician, statesman. A man in the prime of his life, in the forefront of Indian politics, a headliner, a leader of men, a brilliant orator. And India was the poorer for his loss. Not since the death of Tilak had India suffered such a national tragedy. Yet he was not a man of the people, so much as an intellectual giant, whom we respected. He had come to power because of his undoubted ability. He knew the art of convincing people. He had carried with him a substantial majority when he drifted from orthodox Gandhism to lead the Swarajist revolt. He had been even as a rebel against authority, a success and not a failure. He had moved from strength to strength and now at the height of his power he had died a somewhat sudden death. Intellectually, he was respected as much, if not more than the Mahatma. Logic, reasoning, the courteous denials of debate, constitutional opposition, strategic deadlocks—these were the means he had used in his attempt to bring India quicker to its goal.

Once before in the history of the Congress a time had come when Tilak might have split its solidarity. And the fates decreed that Tilak should pass out of the picture rather than such a thing should happen. History had repeated itself and Gandhi was once more left supreme master of the Indian political situation, when the great Swarajist leader passed away on the sad sixteenth of June. Still in political retirement and at his spinning wheel, Gandhi was reluctant to resume the political leadership, which fell vacant at Das's death. Instead he hastened to Calcutta to pay his tribute to a great collegue, who was no more. Side by side, they had fought in many wars — wars for the liberation of humanity, wars of freedom, wars against oppression, wars against the armed might of a great Empire. What matter if in the last few months they had differed on a question of tactics?

Gandhi never forgot his duty. Back in Calcutta, he headed the funeral procession to the burning *ghauts.*

P. R. Das, the brother of Deshbandu, with whom I stayed at Patna only recently, described to me the scenes at his brother's funeral, which I had only seen on the screen. It is one of the more beautiful things that I have listened to, as this, the last and the youngest of the brilliant trilogy of Das brothers leant back in his little study and spoke of the passing of a hero. C. R. Das was a hero to the Indian people. He embodied the struggle of Indian freedom and we, Indians, were glad of the opportunity of paying homage to a man of his kind. He gave us courage by his conviction. And when P. R. Das said: "Even I, a brother, could not get near the bier because the people had as of right claimed him as their own," I knew what Deshbandu meant to India. And Gandhi was not slow to acknowledge that greatness, for he stayed on to build a memorial to commemorate Das's name and his work. He had come to the funeral to share in the national sorrow as a representative of the people of India.

XIX

MAN OF MYSTERY

WHATEVER MAY HAVE BEEN THE RIFT IN GANDHI'S intellectual following, the poor of India still saw the halo round his head and treated the ground he walked on as sacred. He was the one great holy man of India and in his religious greatness he enjoyed a splendid isolation. No one—not Das, nor Nehru, nor anyone else—brilliant as they may have been in the Courts of law and the Legislative Assemblies, could come up to him in the religious hold he exercised over the people of India. More than any other quality of his, this alone made him supreme as the Mahatma.

There are many opinions expressed about Gandhi's hold over the people. What was it in Gandhi, I have often asked some of the great Indians of my time, that appealed to the masses, who could not read or write and who were not in a position to be intellectually convinced ? I do not think there are many persons, who have pondered on this question. Perhaps it was because Gandhi's hold over the masses has always been an undisputed fact.

Sic itur et est. So it shall be and is. *Sic semper itur.* So it shall always be.

But some have thought and given me an answer. There is a majority opinion, which favours the idea of his being regarded as a man of superhuman qualities with the touch of the saint and martyr. A country like India, so impressionable, so believing, so very superstitious, could hardly resist the presence in their midst of a man who behaved like a saint, spoke like a prophet and conducted himself like a messiah. He was something after their heart. It was difficult for them to cast him aside as just another man. He seemed to incorporate all the qualities in all the idols which they worshipped. And yet he was so near to them that he was one of them, something they could touch with reverence and yet find human. Others have attributed Gandhi's appeal to the masses to other qualities. Perhaps the most significant view was that expressed to me once by Bhulabhai Desai, leader of the Congress opposition in the Central Legislative Assembly and a member of the Working Committee, a body which bears comparison to the Fascist Grand Council and in which also the supreme authority with relation to all Congress matters rests. It was Bhulabhai Desai, who spoke of Gandhi's "fearlessness", as the one supreme quality of the man, which embraced all others. I cannot help feeling it is a well-chosen word, comprising Gandhi's religious fervour with his undoubted courage. It is an ample word. It expresses that power within him, of which we were conscious but which we could not quite describe. It was this fearlessness of Gandhi that made him shun danger, and play with life. His fasts, his refusals to respect the threats against his liberty and person, his utter disregard of all sanctions that could have been enforced against him—these were the things that endeared him to the hearts of the people. He based his fearlessness on his faith in prayer and in God and this faith supplied that strong religious flavour without which his actions would at times have appeared, though brave, a trifle foolish.

Strange things happened to this man. The mystery about him grew. He never quite satisfied the curiousity of the people. He had a disarming smile about him that turned cynics into blind sheep. He was too elusive to be nailed down. He was too vague to be satisfactorily described. Like the universe of Sir James Jeans, though finite, constantly being extended. He spoke not as an ordinary man but as a philosopher. He uttered little sentences that contained great truths. He was simple and yet profound. He was like a Pierian spring of which you could never drink sufficiently. He was as tantalising as a fly that danced round the edges of a gluey paper. He was the sort of man about whom rumours had constantly to be denied. Yet he was just an ordinary little man—a farmer and weaver by profession !

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One day there came to his *ashram* an English woman. Her name was Lilian Slade. Many strange people had walked into his *ashram* out of curiosity before. The journalists of the world had flocked there for material. Tourists of repute made it a place of call to which they took their cameras and their note books. He was one of the sights of India.

But Lilian Slade did not come there like the others. She came seeking admission to the *ashram* in order to be able to devote her life to the cause of our country. And when the news spread through the length and breadth of the world that a white woman was devoting her life to the *ashram* of Gandhi, a gentle murmur ran through it. Who was this woman, they asked. Painfully they discovered that she was the daughter of an English admiral. And there were many English people, who preferred not to discuss the matter any further. It would create undue publicity for a cause they disliked and it would certainly create a bad precedent. The irony of it must have been too much for the "Sahibs" of India. They had seen her dining with the pick of English bureaucracy in India — at Government House, with the Chief Justice and his wife, at the Bishop's and at the Commanding

Officer's. What a terrible blow it was to the prestige of the Englishman that the daughter of the admiral should now be an inmate of Gandhi's *ashram*. They felt a little relieved when later she changed her name to Miraben. But the damage had already been done, and the world watched eagerly this phenomenon of an English girl brought up in the strictest of discipline and etiquette, from whom, as Glorney Boulton says, the India of the Indians was withheld, breaking the artificial barriers of false pride to respond to the call of the most Indian among Indians.

But it was not just one single English girl that had come within the Gandhi spell. The left wing of English politicians, the socialists, the English Liberals, had begun to look upon this unusual man with respect. Even the clergy, impressed by Gandhi's sincerity of religion, had begun to pay him the reverence due to a holy man. At Cawnpore, at the Congress over which Sarojini Naidu presided, the Rev. J. H. Holmes of America rose amid the cheers of the Congress delegates, for he was wearing a Gandhi cap as a friendly gesture towards the Congress, and said: "Yesterday, I heard Dr. Abdul Rahman claiming Gandhiji as a South African. May I not claim him to-day for the whole world ? May I not say that the Society of Friends, which I represent, regard him with the same reverence and believe in his work as you do ? I ought to say that we have gone very far wrong in our Western civilization. We have gone too far in the pursuit of wealth and power. It is a deep evil in our whole Western civilization. Our love of wealth has resulted in its concentration, our longing for power has brought on war after war and will very likely plunge us in further wars until civilization is destroyed. So we gladly turn to you, who are indicating another and better way, and we hope that while keeping the good things in nature and inventions, we should follow the brotherly spirit which is represented by the great prophet among you."

Yes, the eyes of the world had once more turned on Gandhi, now supreme in India, though unwilling

to come into the limelight that was focussed on him. The time had not yet come for him to wear the mantle of a political leader. He preferred to remain the hermit in his *ashram*. The task of leading India into another fray was too much for him, and he believed that India was not yet in a position to respond. Speaking at Calcutta, Gandhi said: "I have admitted my incompetence. I have admitted that I have been found wanting as a physician prescribing a cure for this malady. I do not find that either Hindus or Muslims are ready to accept my cure, and, therefore, I simply nowadays confine myself to a passing mention of this problem and content myself by saying that some day or other we, Hindus and Muslims, will have to come together, if we want the deliverance of our country. And if it is to be our lot that, before we can come together, we must shed one another's blood, then I say, the sooner we do so, the better it is for us. If we propose to break one another's heads, let us do so in a manly way. Let us not then shed crocodile tears, let us not ask for sympathy from any quarter, if you do not propose to give any quarter."

It made some of his best friends wonder whether the years in gaol had dimmed the light which once shone in this man.

XX

IRWIN-BIRKENHEAD-SIMON

THE YEAR THAT FOLLOWED WAS COMPARATIVELY uneventful. Riots had become a common feature in India. It was only when the disturbances happened outside your bedroom window that you sat up and took notice. Reports of rioting had lost their headline importance and one had to run carefully through one's paper to find out how law and order were progressing in India.

It was a Good Friday on April 6th, 1926, when there came to the shores of India a devout Anglican as Viceroy of India in succession to Lord Reading. The day had its significance for a man with the religious fervour of Lord Irwin. A Yorkshireman, a genuine product of the backwoods of England, the son of the then Viscount Halifax, Lord Irwin* was an experiment in Britain's administration of India. He was different from his predecessors. He had not the arrogance of Curzon, the foreign-office manners of Chelmsford, nor the precision of Reading. Lord Irwin's approach to the Indian problem was influenced by his own individuality, and not by the traditions

* Now Lord Halifax, but I have preferred to refer to him in this book as Lord Irwin.

of the India Office, to which he was constitutionally subordinate. It was the approach of a man who was man-loving and God-fearing. He was a humble person, who walked with his head upright and his conscience clear. Yet he walked on earth, not in the clouds. He preferred to set foot on India as it was, with the full realization of the awakening of its national conscience rather than on the India that *was*—a long, long time ago.

It was characteristic of the man that he insisted on observing the sanctity of the day. He did not wish it to be obscured by the celebration that ordinarily accompanies the arrival of the new Viceroy. Nor were conditions in India conducive to celebration and he was even more aware of the unrest among the people than were those who were enthusiastically preparing to receive the representative of their King with a fanfare of trumpets. Such was the man, who arrived in India on the afternoon of that day in April to take over the helm of Government and to play, opposite the Mahatma, a part memorable in the annals of Indian history. England had sent out a gentleman at last.

At the same time in Whitehall in the office of the Secretary of State for India sat the burly figure of the late Lord Birkenhead. As one looks back now upon the amazing career of this man, who began as plain Mr. F. E. Smith, various periods of his life and career stand out by their sheer brilliance. Among his achievements one can perhaps look upon his Presidency of the Oxford Union and his term of office on the woolsack as the most distinguished. And with equal certainty, his tenure of office as Secretary of State for India was conspicuous by its complete lack of understanding of the problem which confronted him. It was the most undignified, ungallant, ungenerous period in an otherwise sparkling career. No man was by nature more unsuited to control the affairs of India than this unsympathetic English peer, who coined epigrams with as much ease at Oxford as he did later in life and who carried with him in his thought

and manner an impertinence all his own. His was perhaps the most sophisticated mind since the days of Oscar Wilde There was a strange similarity in their thought—if only in the style of expression. Much of what he said was worth remembering--not because it made any contribution to profundity of thought so much as because it sparkled far above the conversation of ordinary men. He was the very antithesis of simplicity and genuineness. He seemed as if he was always brilliantly superficial, though more often brilliant than superficial.

It is true Birkenhead has made a great contribution to the jurisprudence of our time. His work on property legislation, his decisions as Lord Chancellor, his judgments in *Edward v Butler* and in *re Polemis* will long be remembered by the student of law. Even so, the generations that will think affectionately of him, will remember him rather by his after-dinner speeches, his quick repartee, his subtle humour, his biting sarcasm and his audacity. It is with these that his name will be more associated than with property legislation and Ireland and the appointment of the Simon Commission for India, for which he was entirely responsible.

The appointment of Birkenhead at the India Office was an unfortunate event for India. It was as if the destiny of the Indian people had come under the influence of an evil star. For the calm that had come over the face of India disappeared when at the fag end of 1927 it was announced that there was to be no Indian on the Royal Commission appointed to draft the future constitution of India.

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Gandhi still lived in retreat. He travelled widely and in those two years he captured the hearts of the people by going into their very homes, their fields, their little plots of ground. What had been to a great many of them a mere vision, had in these many months become a reality. They had now got a glimpse of the man, of whom they had heard even in outlandish districts, where there were no newspapers, no radios and where news travelled only by

word of mouth. For many months his presence was almost ignored by the bureaucracy when consultations were held with distinguished Indian statesmen on various questions affecting India. The new Viceroy had interviewed several Indians. He had refrained from making any contact with Gandhi. The time had probably not yet come, Lord Irwin must have thought, for Gandhi to be disturbed in the seclusion of his retreat. Or perhaps his ill-informed advisers had believed that Gandhi's star had fallen and he was now no longer worth attention. Whatever the reason, it was not till the November of that year—1927—that along with several other politicians, Gandhi received an invitation from the Viceroy to see him at Delhi at his convenience on and after the 5th of that month. From Mangalore in the South to Delhi way up in the North, Gandhi hurried, cancelling his programme to the disappointment of many thousands of people, to respect the invitation of the man who was the head of the British administration in India. Yet all he got was a copy of the Secretrary of State's announcement regarding the appointment of the Simon Commission. Sitaramayya poignantly says. "When asked whether that was all the business, Lord Irwin said 'Yes.' Gandhi felt that a one-anna envelope would have reached it to him."

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On the 8th of that same month, the news was broken to the press and the public. There was a general disappointment felt at this deliberate and insulting exclusion of Indians from the Simon Commission. The Congress, however, were not disappointed. Those who expect nothing can hardly feel disappointed when nothing happens. But to a great number of Indians who had not yet thrown in their lot with the Congress, it was a sad revelation to find that Britain did not rise to great heights of statesmanship at this crucial hour. Britain had failed because there was the wrong man at the helm of the India Office. And nothing would make Lord Birkenhead change his mind. There were several representations made to him. George Lansbury, Ramsay

Macdonald, Philip Snowden, went hastily to persuade Birkenhead, but his lordship refused to budge.

Reviewing the events that followed the boycott of the Simon Commission, Robert Bernays, sent out by Tom Clarke as special correspondent of the *News Chronicle*, said that this giving-in of Lord Irwin was one of the bad mistakes of his Viceregal career. "He ought", Bernays says, "to have yielded to the clamour of the Indian politicians that they should have direct representation on the Simon Commission. The Government at home would hardly have resisted on that question the advice of the man on the spot. Instead, he backed up Lord Birkenhead in his refusal to admit Indians and thereby doomed the Simon Commission to failure before it had landed in Bombay. I am told that Lord Irwin admits this mistake today. It is the one act in his Viceroyalty that he would most like to undo."

This pre-determination on the part of those in authority made Gandhi feel that there was nothing he could say regarding the Secretary of State's announcement of an All-White Commission. The days were over when India looked forward with enthusiasm to the "boons" which Britain periodically conferred on its brown subjects. Lord Irwin was aware of this change in India's attitude when, without another word, Gandhi left Viceregal House, painfully conscious of the loss of his time and energy in having been invited somewhat pointlessly all the way to Delhi. His cold indifference was unlike anything Lord Irwin had expected. It made the Viceroy feel small and the fact that Gandhi preferred to regard the announcement as of no importance, put him somewhat ill at ease. Here was a man whom Lord Irwin had always been asked to regard as a rebel, a man probably of low-cunning, one whom he should avoid if possible, and this same man, when informed of the appointment of a Royal Commission, had shown an indifference towards it which would chill the enthusiasm of the greatest of Viceroys. That moment, in his heart, Lord Irwin knew that the Simon Commission was doomed

to failure in India. Only his sense of loyalty to his King and his immediate superior, the Secretary of State, made him refrain from disassociating himself from the appointment of that Commission.

What was wrong with the Simon Commission ? It has been said that the presence on it of a handful of Indians would have appeased Indian demands, while it would still have left the last word in the hands of the Englishmen. This is a false impression to convey. As Dr. Ansari, presiding over the Madras Congress of 1927, said: "It is not the question of the appointment of a Hindu peer or a Muslim knight, nor is it a question whether Indians should participate in its work as members, assessors or advisers. The principle involved is totally different. It is basic and fundamental. No sane or self-respecting Indian can ever admit the claim of Great Britain to be the sole judge of the measure and time of India's political advance. We alone know our needs and requirements best and ours must be the decisive voice in the determination of our future. It is our inherent and inalienable right. Taking its stand on these principles, the Congress has all along advocated the convening of a Round Table Conference of the representatives of India and Great Britain with plenipotentiary powers to decide the basis of the future constitution of India, to be incorporated into an Act of Parliament. It is only on these conditions that India can, consistently with national honour and dignity, agree to co-operate."

It was as if Gandhi himself had spoken through Dr. Ansari, his devout friend and admirer. The resistance to authority, which appeared to have died down, was beginning to crystallize itself again in the hearts of the people.

Many months had passed since the February of 1922. Months had become years and India had recovered from the weariness of its first great struggle. The wounds had healed up and there were young men walking briskly over the face of India, ready for another struggle. Younger men had brought fresh blood into the main

artery of the national movement and altogether there was an enthusiasm, which had sprung up spontaneously from the people – an enthusiasm which was waiting to be diverted into some specific channel. India was ready to fight it out once again.

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Black flags and a funereal reception awaited Sir John Simon, when he came to the shores of India to hold the constitutional enquiry with which he was entrusted. The cry on the lips of the people was "Go back, Simon." The Legislative Assembly was the centre of several unpleasant exchanges between the elected representatives of the people and the nominated representatives of the Government. On at least one occasion its President, Vithalbhai J. Patel, had threatened to resign. The first Indian to be elected Speaker of that House, Patel had always maintained a very independent attitude. He had given his casting vote against a Public Safety Bill, because it was a reactionary measure purporting to give autocratic powers to the Government. He threw the onus of certifying it on the Viceroy. Once before he had placed on record that the decision of the Assembly was not the free vote of a free Assembly. And in every way he showed in his presidential term an impartial firmness in conducting the debates of the House, which showed that India had caught the spirit of freedom and the word that seemed most expressive of the mood of the country was the word – "Challenge." The atmosphere in India was really tense.

XXI

THE ERA OF PRONOUNCEMENTS

ALL EYES TURNED TO THE CONGRESS AT CALCUTTA, where, to complete the annoyance they had already caused the Government, the Congress passed the following resolution: "This Congress having considered the Constitution, recommended by the All-Parties' Committee Report, welcomes it as a great contribution towards the solution of India's political and communal problems and congratulates the Committee on the virtual unanimity of its recommendations, and, whilst adhering to the resolution relating to complete independence passed at the Madras Congress, approves of the Constitution drawn up by the Committee as a great step in political advance, specially as it represents the largest measure of agreement attained among the important parties in the country. Subject to the exigencies of the political situation, this Congress will adopt the Constitution if it is accepted in its entirety by the British Parliament on or before the 31st December, 1929, but in the event of its non-acceptance by the date or its earlier rejection, the Congress will organise

a campaign of non-violent non-co-operation by advising the country to refuse taxation and in such other manner as may be decided upon. Consistently with the above, nothing in this resolution shall interfere with the carrying on in the name of the Congress of the propaganda for complete independence."

In such certain terms was the Congress ultimatum couched. It was generally referred to as the Calcutta resolution. Gandhi had with his usual courtesy included a sentence in the original draft of the resolution empowering the President to send the text of this resolution together with a copy of the report to the Viceroy for such action as he may be pleased to take, but the younger element in the Congress, Jawaharlal and Subas Bose, were not in favour of taking any notice of the Viceroy or anyone else. They believed that the Congress should in its decisions be self-sufficient. Courtesy, which Gandhi regarded as the heritage of all great people, had to be forgone. But except for these differences on minor points, Gandhi's word had again begun to assert itself. The Swarajists had suffered a great loss in C. R. Das and Nehru, the elder, was a little tired of his followers. Council entry had had its day and Motilal Nehru returned like the prodigal to the fold.

Meanwhile, an invitation came to Gandhi to undertake a European tour in the following year. The world had begun to take a more active interest in Indian affairs and people all over the world, and particularly in Europe, wanted to get first-hand information about what was happening in that great continent from a man who could fairly be said to represent the Indian people and to express their hopes, their fears, their aspirations. But Gandhi declined the offer. There was a great deal of work to be done in India as a result of the Congress ultimatum to Government. The Congress resolution by which civil disobedience was to be revived, might have consequences which he could not foresee and it was inadvisable for Gandhi to leave India at such a crucial moment.

His instinct as ever guided him on such occasions. He wrote in reply to the invitation :

"I have no voice from within prompting me to go. On the contrary, having put a constructive resolution before the Congress and having received universal support, I feel that I will be guilty of desertion if I, having voted for the resolution, never meant to carry it out. It may be that I shall have nothing to do during the year in respect of the programme, but I feel that it is not for me to reason thus. I must not lose faith in the workers. A voice from within tells me that I must not only hold myself in readiness to do what comes my way, but I must even think out and suggest means of working out what to me is a great programme. Above all, I must prepare myself for the next year's struggle, whatever shape it may take."

This was in its way a prediction of the trouble that was to come. No man has in this age relied so much on instinct as Mahatma Gandhi. His inner voice had seldom erred and even when at times it seems to conflict with reason and all the laws of deduction, later events always proved that the instinctive guidance he got was right and what was considered to be the more logical deduction was often based on false premises. It was the key-note of Gandhi's success — this staking of his conduct on the urge of the inner self.

Already, therefore, by the February of 1929, there was a growing feeling in India that the unrest would spread itself all over the country and some sort of mass resistance would be offered in view of the humiliation that had been inflicted on the people by the appointment of the Simon Commission and the deliberate exclusion of Indians from its personnel.

Events soon took a rapid turn. The Simon Commission returned to England. Baldwin, Birkenhead and the rest were out of office and Labour had gained a victory at the polls. That was the May of 1929 when Mr. Ramsay Macdonald became once more the tenant of 10, Downing Street, and Wedgewood Benn came to the India Office.

Almost immediately, sensing the change that had come over the English people when they turned Left, Lord Irwin took four months leave and rushed to England to see if the complete failure of the Simon Commission could not in some way be averted. So long as Lord Birkenhead had been in charge of Indian affairs, Lord Irwin knew this was impossible. Birkenhead's obstinacy on previous occasions had convinced him on that point. But now there was a different atmosphere in Whitehall, and as Lord Irwin said, he was going to England "to devise some means whereby the constitutional question might be clarified, and a greater degree of co-operation obtained from all sections of Indian political opinion before Parliament was asked to pronounce upon whatever scheme of reforms might be laid before it as a result of the statutory enquiry." With this purpose in mind, Lord Irwin left India.

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The four months were not without fruit. When Lord Irwin returned in October, he was in a position to lay before the Indian people proposals, which went a long way to show that His Majesty's Government had changed its attitude towards India and that it had realized the need of Indian co-operation in order to effect a lasting solution of the Indian problem. These proposals were embodied in a statement issued by Lord Irwin on his return to India.

For the first time it was officially recognized that the destiny of India was bound up with that of the Indian States and that its future would have to be determined in relation to those autonomous and sovereign bodies to which, geographically, it was permanently bound. It showed that Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru had not in vain pleaded in the past for the consideration of a federal scheme for India. The second important announcement was the formation of a Conference at which British and Indian delegates would meet to consider the proposals which would finally be submitted to Parliament. This was to be the Round Table Conference.

The last part of that announcement, which was perhaps the most important, was the enunciation of British policy with regard to India and the goal, which it was striving to achieve. "It is His Majesty's will and pleasure that the plans laid by Parliament in 1919 should be the means by which British India may attain its due place among his Dominions. Ministers of the Crown, moreover, have more than once publicly declared that it is the desire of the British Government that India should, in the fullness of time, take her place in the Empire in equal partnership with the Dominions. But in view of the doubts which have been expressed both in Great Britain and India regarding the interpretation to be placed on the intentions of the British Government in enacting the Statute of 1919, I am authorised on behalf of His Majesty's Government to state clearly that in their judgment it is implicit in the declaration of 1917 that the natural issue of India's constitutional progress, as there contemplated, is the attainment of Dominion Status."

These were not ambiguous words. The Statute of Westminister, which was at that time in contemplation, would give the Dominions a freedom, which enabled them to decide their own internal and external policy. To attain its due place among the Dominions, was, therefore, quite a clear objective and the first reception of that news in India gladdened many an Indian heart, which felt that the vision and foresight of a Christian gentleman had at last triumphed over the stolid diplomacy of Empire-builders. There was also a different type of man in charge of the affairs of State. The bulk of Labour Cabinet Ministers came from a very humble walk of life. Sons of miners, engine-drivers, school-masters — they had been for many years the under-dogs of England. Only now with the awakening of a class-less conscience, the destiny of the country had fallen into the hands of those who were the people themselves. It was only natural that the coming into power of Socialism in England would reflect itself in England's attitude to India.

Within less than a day the Congress Working Committee gave its consideration to the offer made by the Viceroy and after carefully studying the situation, expressed its desire to co-operate and work for a peaceful solution of India's problems. But it laid down certain essential conditions, which were vital for the success of a Conference. These conditions were three in number — that a policy of general conciliation be adopted to induce a calmer atmosphere, that the Government should grant an amnesty to political prisoners, and that the representation of progressive political organizations should be effectively secured and as the Indian National Congress was the largest among such bodies, it should have a predominant representation.

The only other point raised in their statement was the clarification of the paragraph in the Viceroy's statement, which dealt with Dominion Status. The Congress said: "Some doubt has been expressed about the interpretation of the paragraph in the statement made by the Viceroy on behalf of His Majesty's Government regarding Dominion Status. We understand, however, that the Conference is to meet not to discuss when Dominion Status is to be established, but to frame the scheme of a Dominion constitution for India. We hope we are not mistaken in thus interpreting the import and implications of the weighty pronouncement of His Excellency the Viceroy."

Gandhi himself was "dying to co-operate." "I have," he said, "responded on the very first opportunity that offered itself, but I have meant every word of the joint manifesto, as I have of the now-famous Calcutta resolution of the Congress. The two are in no sense contradictory. The letter of a document is nothing, if the spirit of it is preserved in effect. I can wait for a Dominion Constitution if I can get real Dominion Status in action. That is to say, if there is a real change of heart, a real desire on the part of the British people to see India a free and self-respecting nation, and on the part of the officials in India a true spirit of service. But this means

substitution of the steel bayonet by the goodwill of the people. Are Englishmen and Englishwomen prepared to rely for the safety of their lives and property upon the goodwill of the people rather than upon the gun-mounted forts? If they are not yet ready, there is no Dominion Status that would satisfy me. My conception of Dominion Status implies present ability to sever the British connection if I wish to. Therefore, there can be no such thing as compulsion in the regulation of the relations between Britain and India. If I choose to remain in the Empire, it is to make a partnership of power for promoting peace and goodwill in the world, never to promote exploitation or what is known as Britain's imperialistic creed..."

It was characteristic of Gandhi and the Congress that they no longer contented themselves with vague generalizations. So much had happened in the past to disillusion them that they distrusted vagueness in any form. They knew the years that it had taken to implement the Montagu announcement and even now, India was as far away from that goal as ever. That is why they wanted to know exactly how they stood before getting too enthusiastic about the pronouncement of Lord Irwin and the goal of British policy, which it contained.

The fears of the Indians were not unjustified. Already within the next few days there was an uproar in the House of Commons and Conservative die-hard opinion strongly resented this new policy of conciliation, which the Labour Government had inaugurated in India. Speeches were made about the glory of the Empire, forgetting as these great Empire-builders did, that they could no longer hold India by the sword. Even so these die-hards were hard to placate and in the attempt to keep them quiet, the Labour Government through its spokesman Wedgewood Benn, the Secretary of State for India, undid much of the good work Lord Irwin had done in India when he made the announcement. The policy of His Majesty's Government had not changed, Wedgewood Benn kept repeating to that hostile House of Commons, and as he succeeded in convincing English Conservative opinion on that point, he

also inadvertently convinced India and the Congress that the gestures of Lord Irwin and the new Labour Government were not meant to be taken too seriously.

With such thoughts in his mind, Gandhi went with several others to Delhi to meet the Viceroy to see if some basis of co-operation could be agreed upon. The Viceroy had the advantage of drawing sympathy on his side, because of a miraculous escape from a bomb explosion, which might well have wrecked his train. Courtesy demanded that one should be sympathetic at a time like this and there was a consensus of opinion deploring such actions, all of which was in Lord Irwin's favour. Then the Viceroy came to the point. He broke the ice by asking where they should begin. In his attitude he reflected an earnestness to extend a hand, which was continually being pulled back by those who were in the offices at Whitehall. Lord Irwin wanted to make the right gesture by releasing the political prisoners, but Gandhi would not swallow the bait and preferred to know the real position regarding Dominion Status. Was the Round Table Conference to presume the grant of Dominion Status or was that essential factor still problematic ? Lord Irwin regretted he could not give Mr. Gandhi any assurance on this point and both knew at that time that co-operation between them in such circumstances was impossible. The Viceroy's statement was, therefore, only an attempt to bend the nettled hedge to allow a poacher to pass temporarily in dubious safety.

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Gandhi was now playing a strange role in Indian politics. He did not want to risk another failure and the responsibilities attached to a leader were too great for him to bear. A set-back was often too depressing, and he therefore declined to come to the front of the stage and take the bow. Indian opinion was so fickle that there was no knowing whether he would be greeted with applause or with ripe tomatoes. And Gandhi wanted neither. He disliked applause for he was modest.

But he was also very sensitive to criticism and ripe tomatoes. Therefore, he declined to lead the Congress at that crucial stage and preferred to nominate its President. This is a privilege which he now enjoys almost as of right. Gandhi judged the tempo of Indian opinion, and in view of the happenings and the announcements of the day, he pressed upon the Congress the leadership of the young Jawaharlal Nehru. The Congress accepted Gandhi's advice and one saw for the first time a young and impetuous man as the accredited leader of the Indian National Congress—the Congress which met at Lahore. Son had followed father, because in the year before at Calcutta, it was Motilal Nehru, who was the President.

Comrades! — Nehru said, beginning his fiery Presidential address in a manner, unorthodox for India and based, perhaps, on the speeches in the Red Square of Moscow. That was the note on which he began, initiating a new era in the politics of Congress, for it was the first time in its history that the Congress had associated itself with Socialism, even though it was only the personal association of its President. "I must frankly confess", Jawaharlal said, "that I am a socialist and a republican and am no believer in Kings and princes, or in the order which produces the modern kings of industry, who have greater power over the lives and fortunes of men than even kings of old, and whose methods are predatory as were those of the old feudal aristocracy." And Gandhi smirked a little. How refreshing to hear these things uttered by a young man so full of life and courage, even though he would not say them himself!

The Congress attitude to the Viceroy's announcement was then laid down. It was one of comparative indifference. How could they co-operate so long as there was no guarantee that real freedom would come? It did not matter whether you called it Independence or Dominion Status. The real thing was the conquest of power and it was the complete freedom of India in the fullest sense of that word, that the Congress stood for.

These were some of the sentiments Jawaharlal Nehru expressed.* One could see in his utterances the conflict between his own instinct and his subservience to his guide and master, the Mahatma, whom Jawaharlal had always been taught by his father to look up to and respect. It was in his wavering between the various methods to be employed in achieving India's goal that this conflict was to be found. The intellectual conviction, which had come to him through the works of Lenin and Marx, differed from the teachings of Gandhi. The best that Nehru could do under the circumstances was to try and assimilate these two conflicting doctrines. "Our choice", Nehru said, "is limited, not by our own constitution, which we can change at our will but by facts and circumstances. Article one of our constitution lays down that our methods must be legitimate and peaceful. Legitimate, I hope they will always be, for we must not sully the great cause, for which we stand, by any deed that will bring dishonour to it and that we may ourselves regret later. Peaceful, I should like them to be, for the methods of peace are more desirable and more enduring than those of violence. Violence too often brings reaction and demoralisation in its train, and in our country especially, it may lead to disruption. It is perfectly true that organised violence. rules the world today and it may be that we could profit by its use. But we have not the material or the training for organised violence and individual or sporadic violence is a confession of despair. The great majority of us, I take it, judge the issue not on moral but on practical grounds, and if we reject the ways of violence, it is because it promises no substantial results."

In these last words of Nehru was to be found the new attitude of the younger generation of Congress socialists to non-violence. They rejected the use of force on practical grounds — a dangerous philosophy to preach in a country, which could barely be kept under control by Gandhi's continual preaching of *Ahimsa* principles. It was not because non-violence was more practical that Gandhi had preached it. It was rather because of its high

moral value. Let there be no mistake whatever about that. Its practicability was only a secondary consideration or else it would have lost its purpose. However, be that as it may, what emerged so conspicuously from the Lahore Congress was that there was a new fighting spirit in the rank and file — a spirit, which had hitherto not expressed itself so firmly and so resolutely. It was a determination to fight to the finish. This was what Gandhi sensed at Lahore and he knew that the time was soon to come, when he would lead his country to fight once more for the liberation of its people.

XXII

TAKING STOCK

IT WAS NOW TIME TO ASK WHAT WAS THE ULTIMATE goal of Indian aspirations. Words had been bandied about without attention being paid to the difference in their meanings — differences, which implied a greater or lesser degree of responsibility on those in whose hands the government of India would eventually fall. Dominion Status and Independence seemed easy enough to be included in Congress resolutions at a time when there was little likelihood of getting either. But with the Round Table Conference in sight and the climb down of the die-hard and reactionary element in England, it seemed as if within a generation or two at the very latest, India would be in a position to decide for itself whether it wanted to remain within the protection of the British Empire or whether it wanted to gamble with its destiny on its own.

It had always been a truism about British policy, from whatever aspect one looked at it, that by trying to stand on its dignity and its somewhat over-rated prestige,

it had made the opposing side clamour for demands which went much further and to which in the end, under greater pressure, England had always to accede. This missing of the appropriate and psychological moment seems to be inherent in the British character. It was to be seen in the history of Ireland and the rise to power of Mr. De Valera. It was responsible for the eventual passing of the Statute of Westminster — and much later in the various negotiations between Britain and the Fascist dictatorships, in the Italian and the German attitude to the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations, it became evident even to large sections of English public opinion that England would have done better to have given of its own accord and given freely what in the end was taken from it without grace, leaving very little dignity.

The history of the Indian national movement has borne out the truth of these remarks. The Indian answer to the strong hand used in Indian policy was the Congress determination to fight to the bitter end for the complete and absolute freedom of the Indian people. It pledged itself to gain complete independence for India, chiefly because of the way in which the English people behaved soon after the Viceroy's announcement of the goal of British policy in India. Had His Majesty's Government given Gandhi and the Congress the assurances, which they wanted and which could reasonably be interpreted from the Viceroy's declaration, namely, that the Conference in London was to try to give effect to Dominion Status, much of the bitterness of feeling that was later aroused and has since existed between the two nations could have been avoided, and with the co-operation of the Congress, a workable scheme could have been evolved, which would have left certain ultimate powers in the hands of the British Government and still have given India a substantial measure of self-government. India would have been satisfied with such a gesture. As it was, the debate on India in the House of Commons showed quite clearly that England wanted to hang on to that priceless jewel in the Imperial Crown, defending it with all the armed force at

its command and caring little or nothing for the wishes, the welfare and the advancement of three hundred and seventy million Indian people.

It has been asked by the more practical and able British statesmen and civil servants whether the Congress and its spokesman Mr. Gandhi, in making the demands for Independence realized its implications. Would India be able to support itself financially? Would India be able to defend itself in the event of a foreign invasion? Would any one section of Indian opinion or religion be able to withstand the onslaught upon it of the other? In short, if the British were to withdraw from the Indian scene, would not law and order end up in complete chaos?

There is little doubt as to India's self-sufficiency. Rich in food and raw materials, it is known to produce almost every commodity, which is required for a nation. On the contrary it has large exports of surplus. Even the cotton, which it now imports from America, will in the near future be grown in India itself, and the only thing for which India will have to be dependant upon other countries will be the machinery it uses. It seems hardly possible that if England should refuse to export machinery to India, there would not be other countries, such as America and Japan, willing to supply.

Moreover, the severance of the British connection would mean that India's national debt, which was chiefly incurred because of Britain's Imperialistic wars, would automatically be cancelled. The only safeguard for the payment of these debts is the existence of the British Army in India and the control which Britain still retains over India's finances. If one analyses this debt, one begins to realize how England has lent India money to make India fight for England. So it was in the last War. It is hardly an *Indian* national debt. The cancellation of such a debt would not be against the conscience or the morals of the nation. On all other financial matters India would gain by severing the British connection. At the moment there is a great deal of Indian revenue going out of India every year in the shape of pays and

pensions of Englishmen, who work in India but whose families are always in England. Consequently a large portion of Indian moneys are spent in England and elsewhere and India is the poorer for this loss. There is also a great feeling of resentment at the salaries paid to officials, most of whom have been for many years not Indians but Englishmen, and this becomes almost an absurdity when you bear in mind the poverty of the country and its average wage-earning capacity, which has been rated as a little under two annas or two pence a day. All these facts as also the retention of an army for Imperial purposes, far above that required for the safety of India itself, show that financially India has been crippled by the British raj and that it has everything to gain by disassociating itself from British obligations and British commitments.

What about India's power to defend itself? This is a question which has to be answered in relation to certain existing facts which cannot be overlooked. It is universally known that Britain, so long as it can hold India at the point of the sword, will not hesitate to do so. A hundred and fifty years of British rule have borne witness to that. In such circumstances it would be right to say that if India did overthrow the supremacy of the British raj in India, that power would by itself be sufficient to withstand any other foreign invasion. It would seem hardly probable that a foreign nation would cast eyes on a country which Britain, a first rate power and with all the resources at its command, could not hold. But all this is hypothetical. The Indian demand at no stage has expected a complete and immediate withdrawal of the British. What has been said, even by the moderate section of Indian opinion, which went to the earlier Round Table Conferences, was that a certain Indianisation was necessary in the Army. To this end, they tackled the British spokesmen on the other side and asked them how soon and at what rate they were prepared to Indianise the Army in India. It was the non-committal answers, which they received, that showed how completely farcical

that Conference was intended to be. Figures have shown that if the replacement of all the wastage in the Officers' class was entirely Indian, it would still take over fifty years to Indianise the Officers alone. And that would be the most drastic measure that India could take. So that, if proportionately only half the wastage was Indianised, it would take double the time. Under such circumstances it is difficult to try to answer a question, which should never have been asked in the first place. The main argument has always been that the British domination over India has not been exerted for India's benefit and that is what the Congress and Gandhi and India as a whole resent with all the force at their command.

It is pertinent at this stage to say that Gandhi has exercised almost a restraining influence on India. Were it not for him, there is little doubt in my mind that India, charged with a more daring patriotism, would have made a bolder bid for power. The method it would have employed would have been the method employed elsewhere, bringing much suffering and destruction in its train. But it would have left its mark on the English countenance. Those of us who hate to see this futile shedding of blood, and who have dreaded the emaciation of the species, the mutilation, the disease, the carnage which would have followed, have prayed silently that the British would have the sense to give India the substance of self-determination in the lifetime of Gandhi, than that later, without him, we should be urged by forces with which we have little sympathy, but which may absorb the masses into them and be beyond our power to withhold. Therefore, if something like Dominion Status with the added privileges granted by the Statute of Westminster were to be given to India in the lifetime of the Mahatma, it would be possible to maintain the British connection and safeguard the vested interests of Great Britain in India — interests which might later be in danger of complete extinction.

Some of these desperate sentiments were embodied in a Congress resolution, in the year 1930. It gave

the reasons why the Congress had then pledged itself to Purna Swaraj or complete self-government. It was choicely worded, expressing that latent sorrow, which was in the hearts of the people. It read: "We believe that it is the inalienable right of the Indian people, as of any other people, to have freedom and to enjoy the fruits of their toil and have necessities of life, so that they may have full opportunities of growth. We believe also that if any Government deprives a people of those rights and oppresses them, the people have a further right to alter it or to abolish it. The British Government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom but has based itself on the exploitation of the masses, and has ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually. We believe, therefore, that India must sever the British connection and attain Purna Swaraj or Complete Independence. India has been ruined economically. Village industries, such as hand-spinning, have been destroyed, leaving the peasantry idle for at least four months in the year, and dulling their intellect for want of handicrafts, and nothing has been substituted, as in other countries for the crafts thus destroyed. Customs and currency have been so manipulated as to heap further burdens on the peasantry. British manufactured goods constitute the bulk of our imports. Customs duties betray clear partiality for British manufactures, and revenue from them is used not to lessen the burden on the masses but for sustaining a highly extravagant administration. Still more arbitrary has been the manipulation of exchange ratio which has resulted in millions being drained away from the country. Politically, India's status has never been so reduced as under the British regime. No reforms have given real political power to the people. The tallest of us have to bend before foreign authority. The right of free expression of opinion and free association have been denied to us, and many of our countrymen are compelled to live in exile abroad and cannot return to their homes. All administrative talent is killed and the masses have to be

satisfied with petty village offices and clerkships. Culturally, the system of education has torn us from our moorings and our training has made us hug the very chains that bind us. Spiritually, compulsory disarmament has made us unmanly and the presence of an alien army of occupation, employed with deadly effect to crush in us the spirit of resistance, has made us think that we cannot look after ourselves or put up a defence against foreign aggression, or even defend our homes and families from the attacks of thieves, robbers and miscreants. We hold it to be a crime against man and God to submit any longer to a rule that has caused this four-fold disaster to our country. We recognise, however, that the most effective way of gaining our freedom is not through violence. We will, therefore, prepare ourselves by withdrawing, so far as we can, all voluntary association from the British Government, and will prepare for civil disobedience, including non-payment of taxes. We are convinced that if we can but withdraw our voluntary help and stop payment of taxes without doing violence, even under provocation, the end of this inhuman rule is assured. We, therefore, hereby solemnly resolve to carry out the Congress instructions issued from time to time for the purpose of establishing Purna Swaraj."

Such was the stand which the Congress was determined to take in answer to the disappointed reply it received when it asked the Viceroy to state clearly the purpose, with which the Round Table Conference was to meet. In his several utterances subsequent to his original declaration, he made it quite clear that there was no question whatever of self-determination. The power to determine India's future constitution would remain finally in the hands of Parliament. The Round Table Conference was, therefore, convened only in order to enable British statesmen and British public opinion to be acquainted with the Indian point of view and with India's aspirations. As this was the case, the Congress was not prepared to go to England merely to act as an information bureau for Britain. It was in keeping with its idea of self-respect that it refrained from attending the Round Table Conference.

XXIII

"ONCE MORE UNTO THE BREACH..."

THE ENERGIES OF GANDHI AND THE CONGRESS WERE diverted once more to the renewal of civil disobedience. It was to be on a larger scale than that attempted by the first non-co-operation movement. With his genius for hitting upon the appropriate legislation to resist, he selected the Salt Tax as symbolic of the British administration. No one had till then raised any objection to the duty levied on salt nor had anyone complained about the monopoly which the Government exercised. It was a fact, which was generally known, that salt made by the individual from sea water was more expensive and less hygienic than that which was manufactured by Government. That, however, was not the point at issue. The objection of Gandhi to the Salt Tax was on a moral ground irrespective of any material loss or gain.

There was something very paradoxical about the whole situation. Here was a man urging a whole country on to civil disobedience on a purely theoretical objection. It was a fight for a principle. And so, the movement

which that struggle engendered, being based on moral grounds, and being tacked on to a mere symbol, gathered force by reason of its symbolism. Altogether it was an ingenious idea. Let it not be supposed, however, that the opposition to the Salt Tax was a trivial example of obstructionist tactics. There was also an argument underlying it, which did not manifest itself on the surface. It was that a commodity regarded as a necessity of life by the entire population should not be taxed in however small a measure, because the minutest fraction of a penny was bound to affect a country whose average wage-earning capacity was less than two annas a day. When you regard the Salt Tax in terms of the wage-earning capacity of the Indian people, it appears an inequitous burden for the masses to bear. And this was not too unreasonable an argument for Gandhi to adopt.

From the point of view of political tactics, Gandhi had very aptly chosen the Salt Tax for civil disobedience. It had, of course, nothing to do with India's immediate needs. There had been no recent legislation in connection with salt duties. It was only because it provided a simple argument for Gandhi to put before the masses that he chose the salt tax as the basis of his agitation.

The condition of the Indian masses was such that they would not have understood any constructive argument against Imperialism. Such an argument would have been beyond the understanding of those whom he wanted to enlist for his campaign. Gandhi's whole idea was that his next movement should be a mass movement embracing every type and shade of individual. With this end in view he wanted to have a simple and uniform argument to present to the masses. This he found in the Salt Tax and the reception, with which it met, supplied him with a following of tremendous proportions. It was an eye-opener to the Government. They knew then what it meant when Gandhi spoke. They knew on whose behalf he spoke. They knew, as never before, that his was the echo of the voice of India — a genuine, unamplified echo that was clear and distinct.

Unlike other *coups*, the plans of which are kept a dark secret, Gandhi gave the widest publicity to his campaign. It was characteristic of his method of attack that he always informed the adversary of his every move. He did this with two motives. The one was to play fair, no matter what the consequences. The other was to leave open a possibility of converting the oponent to his way of thinking, for a victory earned in that way was worth much more to Gandhi than one earned by coercion or force.

Accordingly he wrote the now famous letter to the Viceroy. It contained a bitter condemnation of the British rule and its effects on India. It was in parts a very humble appeal to the man, who was at the head of the administration in India. It gave his reasons for resuming civil disobedience and the shape that this disobedience was to assume. Taken to New Delhi by an Englishman, Reginald Reynolds, it was one of the more spectacular documents despatched from Sabarmati Ashram. It was a letter from the representative of the people to the representative of the Crown. It began with the words: "Dear Friend." I reproduce only some of the more pertinent passages.

"Before embarking on Civil Disobedience, and taking the risk I have dreaded to take all these years, I would fain approach you and find a way out.

"My personal faith is absolutely clear. I cannot intentionally hurt anything that lives, much less fellow human beings, even though they may do the greatest wrong to me and mine. Whilst, therefore, I hold the British rule to be a curse, I do not intend harm to a single Englishman or to any legitimate interest he may have in India....

"..Since the announcement, many events have happened which show unmistakably the trend of British policy. It seems as clear as daylight that responsible British statesmen do not contemplate any alteration in British policy that might adversely affect Britain's commerce with India or require an impartial and close scru-

tiny of Britain's transactions with India. If nothing is done to end the process of exploitation, India must be bled with an ever increasing speed. The Finance Member regards as a settled fact the 1s. 6d. ratio which, by a stroke of the pen, drains India of a few crores. And when a serious attempt is being made, through a civil form of direct action, to unsettle this fact, among many others, even you cannot help appealing to the wealthy landed classes to help you to crush that attempt in the name of an order that grinds India to atoms.

"Unless those who work in the name of the nation understand, and keep before all concerned, the motive that lies behind the craving for Independence, there is every danger of Independence itself coming to us so changed as to be of no value to those toiling, voiceless millions for whom it is sought and for whom it is worth taking. It is for that I have been recently telling the public what Independence should really mean.

"Let me put before you some of the salient points. The terrific pressure of Land Revenue, which furnishes a large part of the total, must undergo considerable modification in an Independent India. Not only, then, has the Land Revenue to be considerably reduced, but the whole revenue system has to be so revised as to make the ryot's good its primary concern. But the British system seems to be designed to crush the very life out of him. Even the salt he must use to live is so taxed as to make the burden fall heaviest on him, if only because of the heartless impartiality of its incidence. The tax shows itself still more burdensome on the poor man, when it is remembered that salt is the one thing he must eat more than the rich man, both individually and collectively. The drink and drug revenue, too, is derived from the poor. It saps the foundations both of their health and morals. It is defended under the false plea of individual freedom, but in reality is maintained for its own sake. The ingenuity of the authors of the Reforms of 1919 transferred this revenue to the so-called responsible part of Dyarchy, so as to throw the burden of prohibition on it, thus, from

the very beginning, rendering it powerless for good. If the unhappy Minister wipes out this revenue, he must starve education, since in the existing circumstances he has no new source of replacing that revenue. If the weight of taxation has crushed the poor from above, the destruction of the central supplementary industry, i.e., hand-spinning, has undermined their capacity for producing wealth.

"The tale of India's ruination is not complete without reference to the liabilities incurred in her name. Sufficient has been recently said about these in the public Press. It must be the duty of a free India to subject all the liabilities incurred in her name, to the strictest investigation, and repudiate those that may be adjudged by an impartial tribunal to be unjust and unfair.

"The inequities sampled above are maintained in order to carry on a foreign administration, demonstrably the most expensive in the world. Take your own salary. It is over Rs. 21,000 per month, besides many other indirect additions. The British Prime Minister gets £5,000 per year, i.e., over Rs. 5,400 per month at the present rate of exchange. You are getting over Rs. 700 per day, against India's average income of less than 2 annas per day. The Prime Minister gets Rs. 180 per day against Great Britain's average income of nearly Rs. 2 per day. Thus you are getting much over five thousand times India's average income. The British Prime Minister is getting only ninety times British average income. On bended knee, I ask you to ponder over this phenomenon. I have taken a personal illustration to drive home a painful truth. I have too great a regard for you as a man to wish to hurt your feelings. I know that you do not need the salary you get. Probably the whole of your salary goes for charity. But a system that provides for such an arrangement deserves to be summarily scrapped. What is true of the Viceregal salary is true generally of the whole administration.

"A radical cutting down of the revenue, therefore, depends upon an equally radical reduction in the expenses

of the administration. This means a transformation of the scheme of government. This transformation is impossible without Independence. Hence, in my opinion, the spontaneous demonstration of 26th January, in which hundreds of thousands of villagers instinctively participated. To them Independence means deliverance from the killing weight.

" Not one of the great British political parties, it seems to me, is prepared to give up the Indian spoils to which Great Britain helps herself from day to day, often, in spite of the unanimous opposition of Indian opinion.

" Nevertheless, if India is to live as a nation, if the slow death by starvation of her people is to stop, some remedy must be found for immediate relief. The proposed Conference is certainly not the remedy. It is not a matter of carrying conviction by argument. The matter resolves itself into one of matching forces. Conviction or no conviction, Great Britain would defend her Indian commerce and interests by all the forces at her command. India must consequently evolve force enough to free herself from that embrace of death.

"It is common cause that, however disorganised, and, for the time being, insignificant it may be, the party of violence is gaining ground and making itself felt. Its end is the same as mine. But I am convinced that it cannot bring the desired relief to the dumb millions. And the conviction is growing deeper and deeper in me that nothing but unadulterated non-violence can check the organised violence of the British Government. My experience, limited though it undoubtedly is, shows that non-violence can be an intensely active force. It is my purpose to set in motion that force, as well against the organised violent force of the British rule as the unorganised violent force of the growing party of violence. To sit still would be to give reign to both the forces abovementioned. Having an unquestioning and immovable faith in the efficacy of non-violence, as I know it, it would be sinful on my part to wait any longer.

"The non-violence will be expressed through civil disobedience, for the moment confined to the inmates of the Satyagraha Ashram, but ultimately designed to cover all those who choose to join the movement with its obvious limitations.

"I know that in embarking on non-violence, I shall be running what might fairly be termed a mad risk. But the victories of Truth have never been won without risks, often of the bravest character. Conversion of a nation that has consciously or unconsciously preyed upon another far more numerous, far more ancient and no less cultured than itself, is worth any amount of risk.

"I have deliberately used the word 'conversion.' For my ambition is no less than to convert the British people, through non-violence, and thus make them see the wrong they have done to India. I do not seek to harm your people. I want to serve them, even as I want to serve my own. I believe that I have always served them. I served them up to 1919 blindly. But when my eyes were opened and I conceived non-co-operation, the object still was to serve them. I employed the same weapon that I have, in all humility, successfully used against the dearest members of my family. If I have equal love for your people with mine, it will not long remain hidden. It will be acknowledged by them, even as the members of my family acknowledged it after they had tried me for several years. If the people join me, as I expect they will, the sufferings they will undergo, unless the British nation sooner retraces its steps, will be enough to melt the stoniest hearts.

"The plan through civil disobedience will be to combat such evils as I have sampled out. If we want to sever the British connection, it is because of such evils. When they are removed, the path becomes easy. Then the way to friendly negotiation will be open. If the British commerce with India is purified of greed, you will have no difficulty in recognising our Independence. I respectfully invite you then to pave the way for an immediate removal of those evils, and thus open a way

for a real conference between equals, interested only in promoting the common good of mankind through voluntary fellowship and in arranging terms of mutual help and commerce equally suited to both. You have unnecessarily laid stress upon the communal problems that unhappily affect this land. Important though they undoubtedly are for the consideration of any scheme of government, they have little bearing on the greater problems which are above communities and which affect them all equally. But if you cannot see your way to deal with these evils and my letter makes no appeal to your heart, on the 11th day of this month, I shall proceed, with such co-workers of the Ashram as I can take, to disregard the provisions of the Salt Laws. I regard this tax to be the most inequitous of all from the poor man's standpoint. As the Independence movement is essentially for the poorest in the land, the beginning will be made with this evil. The wonder is that we have submitted to the cruel monopoly for so long. It is, I know, open to you to frustrate my design by arresting me. I hope that there will be tens of thousands ready, in a disciplined manner, to take up the work after me, and in the act of disobeying the Salt Act, to lay themselves open to the penalties of a Law that should never have disfigured the Statute Book.

"I have no desire to cause you unnecessary embarrassment or any at all, so far as I can help. If you think that there is any substance in my letter, and if you will care to discuss matters with me, and if to that end you would like me to postpone publication of this letter, I shall glady refrain, on receipt of a telegram to that effect soon after this reaches you. You will, however, do me the favour not to deflect me from my course, unless you can see your way to conform to the substance of this letter.

" This letter is not in any way intended as a threat, but is a simple and sacred duty peremptory on a civil resister. Therefore, I am having it specially delivered by a young English friend, who believes in the Indian cause and is a full believer in non-violence, and whom provi-

dence seems to have sent to me, as it were, for the very purpose."

That letter speaks for itself. It has been described as an ultimatum and certainly it was the most arrogant, the most self-assertive and audacious letter that had yet been received by a Viceroy of India. The tone of this letter was firm. Gandhi did not seem to care very much whether its substance pleased His Excellency or not. Even so it was respectful towards the Viceroy as a man. It stressed again and again Gandhi's desire not to hurt Lord Irwin's feelings, not to cause him any undue embarrassment. It revealed in thought and style that Gandhi was a man with a strange personality, a queer mixture of the naive and the calculating, a philosopher and a politician, a man of religion and a man of affairs, simple, straightforward, and sincere. The letter itself was, I take the liberty of saying, beautifully worded.

The reply of Lord Irwin was brief and formal. It deprecated Gandhi's intention of violating the law and of causing a breach of the peace. It was the typical reply of a British administrator. Lord Irwin could not as Viceroy have replied otherwise. Lord Irwin as an ordinary individual might have.

Gandhi commented on the Viceroy's curt note by saying that on bended knees he had asked for bread and received a stone instead. Now his mind was made up, and all India waited anxiously for the fateful day to arrive.

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Dawn had hardly broken on the 12th of March when in the Ashram there was feverish excitement about the arrangements that were being made for the commencement of Gandhi's march. It was expected that Gandhi would be arrested. Gandhi himself was a little surprised that with all the notice he had given the Government, they had not already attempted to frustrate his plans. He had some time before written an article in "*Young India*" giving his followers full instructions as to what they should do when he was arrested. He had appointed a

long list of persons to succeed him in turn and thus carry on the satyagraha march from where the last man left off. But nothing happened to Gandhi. Against all expectations, with the route through Ahmedabad lined with a hundred thousand people from the early hours of the morning, with journalists covering one of the major assignments of their career, Gandhi, still a free man, stepped out of the Ashram, staff in hand to lead his Israelites to the sight of the promised land.

The sight was touching in its simplicity. No pompous ceremonial, no bright uniforms, no martial accoutrements, no trimmings, no trappings. Clad in khaddar, some of them half-naked, with a shawl thrown over their bare torsos, they followed him. "Lead, kindly light! Lead Thou me on!", the soul of India cried. The subsequent manufacture of salt in little pans on the sea-shore at Dandi against the laws of the mighty Government of India was the climax of a pacifist creed. But there was another aspect of this same march. For it drew the ridicule and the scorn of an Anglo-Indian press, which had made it its business to be ignorant about the purpose, the motive and the driving force of a movement based essentially on soul-fource. Fleet Street only gave it prominence through its cartoonists. That was forgivable. Fleet Street was ten thousand miles away from the scene of the suffering and the sorrow that was India. But there were Englishmen in India, who earned their bread on the soil of India and who were in a position to influence and guide Anglo-Indian and English public opinion, who might have had the grace to refrain from pouring scorn on the Dandi March. Living as they did in the midst of a nation's struggle, they might have struck one sympathetic note. But one cannot draw blood out of stone, nor sympathy from barren souls. It is only so long as a nation remains subjected that others dare to ridicule it. A day will come when we will have cause to remember the march to Dandi, even as the Latins remember their march on Rome, or the Soviets the October revolution, or the French the Quatorze Juillet. Somewhere in India a

revolution had begun. Not in the homes of the rich perhaps, but in the hearts of the poor. These down-trodden people had begun to acquire some backbone. Fearlessly they donned a Gandhi cap and wore khaddar in the very same government offices, where ten years ago they would not have been allowed to set foot in such clothes.

The wearing of swadeshi was a result of this renaissance of Indian nationalism. The boycott of foreign goods became most effective. Lancashire began to feel the effects of that more intense boycott and the bread line in the Black North became mightier than ever. The boycott was too quick to give them time to think. That was how England first heard that there was a nationalist movement afoot in India. Nothing else brought it so vividly to their minds as the spectre of unemployed men and the gradual diminution of smoke from the chimneys of the mills in Lancashire.

If you look back now and trace the history of that boycott back to the salt pans and the sea-shore, where, bare-footed, the Mahatma was ostensibly amusing himself by making salt, you begin to realize how he had by that march to Dandi fired the imagination of the Indian people. And that it should have been achieved by discipline and non-violence made it an achievement without parallel in the history of the struggle of humanity to free itself.

The weeks rolled on and the second civil disobedience movement grew. India wondered what was in Lord Irwin's mind. Why had he left Gandhi alone against all Viceregal precedent, against the advice of Anglo-India, against the expectations of Gandhi himself? Was it that Gandhism had triumphed or that Lord Irwin had by some means been converted? Was the Viceroy trying to answer satyagraha with satyagraha? That could not be. He had already ordered the arrest of several important Congress leaders. He had promulgated a ruthless Press Ordinance which virtually put an end to the liberty of the press. Securities were demanded from every newspaper and these were confiscated if the newspaper

gave any space to seditious activities, for in so far as the civil disobedience movement was calculated to overthrow the British rule in India, in however peaceful a manner, it was, because of its ulterior purpose, a seditious movement.

All over India there was a tense atmosphere. It looked like the eve of a great revolution.

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One very striking feature of those days was the entry of women into the national struggle. Gandhi had addressed an appeal to the women of India. It was embodied in an article in *Young India*. He urged them to take up the picketing of shops, which dealt in foreign cloth and liquor. Thereby, he wanted to stimulate the production of khaddar and to bring prohibition more vividly before the public eye. There was, he realized, less excitement and adventure in this form of satyagraha at a time when the spotlight had fallen on the sea-shore. But, said Gandhi: "....if they will put their whole heart in this agitation they will find more than enough excitement and adventure. Before they have done with the agitation, they might even find themselves in prison. It is not improbable that they may be insulted and even injured bodily. To suffer such insult and injury would be their pride. Such suffering, it if it comes to them, will hasten the end."

If there was any one country, which was conspicious by the backwardness of its women, it was India. It was not many years ago that a woman in India was treated like a chattel. She had no position in the society of man. In those religions, which recognized polygamy, she was one among many in a man's household. The Hindu religion did not regard a woman's life worth living after the husband's death, and she was known to kill herself by jumping on the burning funeral pyre, which enveloped the corpse of her dead husband. Orthodox society encouraged this practice of *Suttee*, applauded it and considered it as the right thing to do.

All this happened many years ago. Even so, in a country with that historical background, it had seemed inconceivable, however advanced a form of civilization it attained, that one would live to see the day when the women of India—the real women of India as apart from the few straggling individuals one encountered in the great cities—would be emancipated. Therefore, Gandhi's appeal seemed somewhat misdirected. But such was the temper of the country that from their seclusion these women emerged to play an active part in the political struggle of their country, such as is played in other parts of the world only by the most enlightened women. No one had ever anticipated that those women, who were reluctant to appear in male company and who behaved all their lives like shy school girls, would ever take this short cut to freedom without halting for a few years in the neighbourhood of social reform.

I do not say that Indian women are, in the wider sense, emancipated even today, but the response which met Gandhi's appeal and the way in which thousands of women of the most orthodox families came out in the streets to picket the shops, made one pause and wonder what was happening to India. Satyagraha and the civil disobedience movement could hardly be called a revolution in the accepted sense of the term, but they certainly seemed to effect the most rapid evolution that a people of such immense proportions could undergo.

The appearance of women on the political scene presented a completely different problem to the Government. It was one thing to charge into a phalanx of men and break up civil disobedience by *lathi* charges, but how were they to deal with the women ? After all, there was still the prestige of Britain to be considered. The customs of the West and its code of etiquette regarded it necessary for an Englishman to give up his seat in a bus to a lady and to raise his hat to her on the slightest provocation. And woman was woman all over the world.

Faced with all these new problems the Government eventually decided to strike. It now decided to crush the Indian nationalist movement by the promulgation of ordinances, which corresponded to the Imperial edicts of the Romans and which justified themselves on the ground that they were brought into being by the state of emergency which had arisen at that time. What English statesmen in England and the bureaucracy in India, so anxious to preserve law and order, failed to realize was that this was no longer a state of emergency, but that it was the normal condition of a country fighting for its independence. Nevertheless, the Congress was declared unlawful all over the country and an ordinance was passed by which all property belonging to the Congress was made liable to confiscation. That was Lord Irwin's answer. He had revealed his mind at last. Gandhi had written his second letter to the Viceroy, in which he laid bare his further plan of campaign, which was to seize the Salt Depot at Dharasana and to ask whether on the eve of taking such a step the Government would not agree to give him the substance of Independence, which India demanded. That letter also contained an accusation against the Government's methods of fighting the civil resisters. " I had hoped," Gandhi says, "that the Government would fight the civil resisters in a civilised manner. I could have had nothing to say if in dealing with the civil resisters the Government had satisfied itself with applying the ordinary process of law. Instead, whilst the known leaders have been dealt with more or less according to the legal formality, the rank and file have been often savagely and in some cases, even indecently assaulted. Had these been isolated cases, they might have been overlooked. But accounts have come to me from Bengal, Bihar, Utkal, the United Provinces, Delhi and Bombay, confirming the experiences of Gujerat, of which I have ample evidence at my disposal. In Karachi, Peshawar and Madras the firing would appear to have been unprovoked and unnecessary. Bones have been broken, private parts have been squeezed, for the purpose of

making volunteers give up salt, which is valueless to the Government but precious to the volunteers. At Mathura an Assistant Magistrate is said to have snatched the national flag from a ten-year old boy. The crowd that demanded restoration of the flag, thus illegally seized, is reported to have been mercilessly beaten back. That the flag was subsequently restored, betrayed a guilty conscience. In Bengal, there seem to have been only a few prosecutions and assaults about salt, but unthinkable cruelties are said to have been practised in the act of snatching flags from volunteers. Paddy fields are reported to have been burnt, eatables forcibly taken. A vegetable market in Gujerat has been raided because the dealers would not sell vegetables to officials. These acts have taken place in front of crowds who have submitted without retaliation in pursuance of the Congress mandate....Yet this in only the fifth week of the struggle!"

Five weeks had gone, in which the Government had refrained from laying hands on Gandhi. But now Lord Irwin decided to take quick action, and before Gandhi could start on his march to Dharasana, he was arrested at dead of night and taken by train to Borivli, a little station near the town of Bombay, and driven from there surreptitiously to Poona, where he was incarcerated in the Yeravada Prison. The correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* describes that scene: "There was something intensely dramatic in the atmosphere while we were waiting for the train, for we all felt we were sole eye-witnesses of a scene which may become historical — this arrest of a prophet, false or true, for, false or true, Gandhi is now regarded as a holy man and saint by millions of Indians. Who knows whether, one hundred years from now, he may be worshipped as a supreme being by three hundred million people. We could not shake off these thoughts, and it seemed incongruous to be at a level-crossing at dawn to take the prophet into custody."

Unlike his arrest in 1922 it was to be followed by no great trial. In fact, there was no trial at all, great or small. The Government had ceased to rule the country by the

ordinary law of the land. Gandhi was, therefore, detained during His Majesty's pleasure. The venerable and late Dadabhai Naoroji might well have called it "This un-British rule," for Englishmen were now governing India against the laws and principles, which they had fought for and which was a heritage of which Britain had always been justly proud.

In a way it was a triumph over the ordinary law of the land, even though the reason given by those in high authority was one of expediency. As Mrs. Naidu said : "A powerful Government could have paid no more splendid tribute to the far-reaching power of Gandhi than by the manner of his arrest and incarceration without trial, under the most arbitrary law on their Statute Book. It is really immaterial that the fragile and ailing body of the Mahatma is imprisoned behind stone walls and steel bars. It is the least essential part of it. The man and his message are identical, and his message is the living heritage of the nation to-day and will continue to influence the thought and action of the world, unfettered and unchallenged by the mandate of the most autocratic Government of the earth."

"Un-British" was the right word when you considered the brutal way in which the Government tried to crush civil disobedience. There are not many English people who have ever imagined the sort of injuries that the police, as upholders of law and order, inflicted on the crowds which they encountered. It was brute force of an order, which made the most hard-bitten shudder. I do not think that evidence of police atrocities was ever published in the English papers. Had Fleet Street bothered to feature it as front page news, the more recent history of India would have been very different. I believe that the English people as a whole have a greater sense of morality and of justice than those who come in their name to rule over the destiny of India. There has recently been a humanizing of public opinion in England for which, I venture to say, socialism and suffering are largely responsible. The England that stood up to

protest against the persecution of the Jews, against the atrocities committed by Fascism on those who were less prepared for an armed conflict—that England would not have stood up for the brutality which was committed by Englishmen in India.

Lilian Slade, the Admiral's daughter, was one of those who were in a position to see for themselves what was really happening in India. Her testimony should carry weight among her countrymen. She went to Dharasana, to see for herself what the police were doing to the satyagrahi volunteers. Lathi blows on the head, chest, stomach, and joints. Thrusts with lathis in the private parts and abdominal regions–and a lathi, one must remember, is a heavy iron-shod stick. The stripping naked of men before beating. The tearing off of loin cloths and thrusting sticks into the anus. The pressing and squeezing of the testicles till the man became unconscious. The dragging of wounded men by the legs and arms, often beating them while in a wounded condition. The throwing of the wounded into thorn hedges and into salt water. The riding of horses over men as they lay or sat on the ground. The thrusting of pins and thorns into men's bodies, sometimes even when they were unconscious. And the beating of men even after they had become unconscious.

That is what Lilian Slade, an Englishwoman, saw at Dharasana. The words are not mine but hers and are taken from a report which appeared in the *Young India* of June 12th 1930.

My blood curdles as I read through this grim chronicle of atrocities. I doubt very much if England, alleged to be the guardian of these three hundred and seventy million people, would have tolerated this mutilation of human beings in the name of law and order, if it had been aware of what was happening in India. The bombing of Almeria seems a civilized form of warfare in comparison to this and the ravages in China, where whole towns were blown up, a cleaner way of doing things. In point of sheer vulgarity and indecency of assault, it would be

very difficult to equal the British attempt to suppress civil disobedience in India.

Meanwhile, the arrest of Gandhi infuriated Indian opinion beyond all calculation. The wisdom of Lord Irwin in postponing this action now became evident. He had gauged Indian opinion better than all his advisers. He knew then that with Gandhi in prison it was impossible to bridge the gulf between the Government of India and the people. Later he gave way to other advice and tried a complete suppression of the Congress. His edicts declaring it illegal were such as had not been attempted by any predecessor of his. He knew that the strong-hand, even when taken out of the velvet glove, could do little in the face of the non-violent resistance, which was offered. But his hand was forced. If there was no precise instruction from Whitehall, there was behind him a hundred and fifty years of British rule, on the analogy of which he had to govern. At times like these one saw in him the clash of two opposing strains. He was two men in one–the Christian and the Viceroy. And torn between two rival senses of duty, he tried unsuccessfully to fulfil both. It seemed then that the Viceroy in him had triumphed over the Christian.

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One soon becomes un-Christian in India. It is one thing to preach Christianity quite another to practise it. In the eyes of God, all men may be equal, but not in the eyes of the Government of India. Lord Irwin had laid particular emphasis on his Christian duties. No one had doubted his sincerity, his religious fervour, his high Catholicism. But to pray to God on Sundays was not enough, if in one's actions the rest of the week there was a complete disregard of Christian principles. The persecution that took place in Lord Irwin's regime was not the work of a consistent Christian.

Yet Lord Irwin was hardly to blame. Environment can have a great influence on a man's life and environment did funny things to the Englishman in India. Nowhere else did he behave in the shabby manner in which he

conducted himself in India. You can put it down to the heat, if you are an apologist of the British regime. You can put it down to the opportunities for exploitation, if you are an ordinary student of human nature.

There is something artificial about English life in India. The Englishman here has to conform to standards which have themselves been artificially maintained. Add to that the constantly growing complex in him which makes him feel consciously superior. It is a false sense of superiority, even as the feeling within him that his Empire is secure, is based on premises which no longer exist. Circumstances and conditions in India have altered beyond all measure. It is all very well for the Englishman to say that the presence of a small battalion on the scene of a riot or a political disturbance can cause a panic in the hearts of the Indian people. But that is nothing to boast about. There would be the same panic among the members of the Yacht Club or the Officers' Mess, staunch and brave men though they may be, if a detachment of Indian troops suddenly arrived, armed with rifles, to interrupt a meeting of the club or a dinner party at the mess. It is in both the thought of certain death that causes the fright. The Englishman without the gun has no dynamic presence to cause fright. Give India an army of its own, disarm every white man in the country and let us see how brave the Englishman feels in that India. And so we feel in a country, where martial law can give a handful of young English lieutenants the power of life and death over thousands of unarmed Indians.

English life in India is not worthy of emulation. We have seen the English live. It seems to me so much a life of trifles. Let us chronicle some of these things, which we have learnt to associate with the Englishman in India. To start with, there is the Not-at-Home box, the dinner jacket and black tie, the overgrowth of the public school spirit, the red-carpet without which no Governor would tread on Indian soil, the whistle which precedes the Governor's car to and from the most social of functions as distinct from visits of State, the *punkhas*,

which symbolize British rule in that "the natives" sweat to keep the white man cool, graft among the lesser fry, the sanctimonious piety with which they read the *Sketch* and the *Tatler*, the periodical letters to the local *Times*, the mutual interchange of congratulations on the mutual exchange of honours and titles, the Army and Navy Stores. There are other things which are not quite trifles. There is a lack of knowledge of elementary Indian problems, of Indian conditions, and of all Indian languages, customs, and history, the Englishman's pride in that ignorance, his unhealthy consumption of large quantities of alcohol which he can seldom digest in his system and less often pay for, his contemptuous attitude to anything Indian from nationalism to art, his refusal to accept anything that is un-English, his pride therein, his refusal to understand the Indian point of view, his belief that Britons are the super-men of today in spite of the fact that Fascist corporals have challenged this theory, his belief that in a hierarchy of sanctitude God comes first and then the Englishwoman, but that an Indian woman is hardly to be accorded the same respect, his blindness to the gradual disintegration of an Empire and to the danger of eventual relegation to the status of a small island in Europe.

These are some of the things which we have associated with the British in India. The pity of it is that Englishmen have created different images of their own. All these years they have stood before a magnifying mirror and prided themselves on the image they beheld. Someday that glass is sure to break, leaving no image and no mirror.

All this has led to a strained relationship between Indians and the Englishmen in India. Efforts have been made by some of the younger members of the European community, those that came fresh from Oxford and Cambridge in particular, to see if socially one could not meet more often in India and by such meetings bridge the wide gulf. But it has ended always in failure. You could hardly have expected to solve Britain's differences with Germany by inviting the German students in England to tea at

Lady Margaret Hall. So is it also in India. These abortive efforts of young enthusiasts ended as they began, without having got so much as an inch nearer to the real India which they did not know and which they will never see. If there is to be a change of heart, it has obviously to come from somewhere else.

There was, among the star reporters who had flocked to India to cover the civil disobedience movement, an English journalist by the name of George Slocombe. He represented the *Daily Herald*, which at that time led the circulation of Fleet Street with a certified daily sale of two million. Slocombe somehow managed to get permission to interview Gandhi in prison and the result was a sensational article in the *Daily Herald*. Slocombe was an eye-witness to the salt raids at Dharasana. " It was humiliating", he had said, "for an Englishman to stand among the ardent, friendly but deeply moved crowd of volunteers and sympathizers and watch the representatives of the country's administration engaged in this ludicrous, embarrassing business." Slocombe had now published his interview with Gandhi in an article. It contained the terms, the fulfilment of which Gandhi demanded as a condition precedent to Congress participation in the Round Table Conference. The publication of this article caused a first-class sensation in the House of Commons and sent the right-wing of Fleet Street into hysterics. What a preposterous idea that Gandhi should *demand!* How could Britain now adopt an attitude of conciliation towards "the natives", an attitude which would inevitably lead to the loosening of Britain's grip over its Indian Empire ?

Never before had any Indian dictated conditions before taking part in a conference with British statesmen. In the old days it was always looked upon as an honour to sit at the same table with English politicians. But Gandhi and the Congress had done away with this hero-worship of our rulers. And Slocombe put it very forcibly, when he tolled the knell of the old Imperialist method of approach and said: "Negotiation is still possible and after

my two meetings with Mr. Gandhi in prison, I am convinced that conciliation will be met with conciliation, but that violence on either side will not compel surrender of the other. Incalculable disaster may yet be avoided by the frank recognition that the imprisoned Mahatma now incarnates the very soul of India." This was a result of two interviews with Gandhi at Poona on the 19th and the 20th May, 1930. The substance of Independence and not the Simon Report, which had been universally rejected by the Indians, was demanded as the basis of discussion at the Round Table Conference. Some satisfaction was to be granted to the demand for the repeal of the Salt Tax, for the prohibition of liquor and opium and for the ban on foreign cloth. There was to be an amnesty granted to political prisoners. Without this, Gandhi would not call off civil disobedience. But more important than the demands themselves was the fact that Gandhi was in a position to make these demands. Britain could no longer aford to treat his demands with that same contempt, with which it had treated them in the past. That was his achievement.

It is not possible in appraising the importance of the nationalist movement to quibble over points of detail. It was thought that Gandhi's eleven points were a feeble attempt to crystalize the substance of Independence. Independence could not be defined in eleven cardinal points. Nor did Gandhi believe that it could so be done. It was only to lay down what gestures--and "gestures" was the right word—should be made as proof of Britain's desire eventually to grant India the substance of Independence. He was fighting for an abstract principle. The details could be worked out later. He was content to break though the lethargy of those who had ceased to think, of those who did not want to think, of those who were not allowed to think. That is why he wanted to infuse even the abstract idea of freedom into the minds of the Indian people. Only when face to face with the oppression which the British administration inflicted on the masses, would righteous Indian public opinion be aroused.

Negotiation and Slocombe's impassioned journalism were of little avail. Things had come to such a pass that it was impossible for either side to concede an inch without losing a certain amount of self-respect and prestige. The Government and the Congress had taken radically opposite and uncompromising attitudes and it was impossible to bridge the gulf between the two until one or the other gave way even a little. And this neither the Government nor the Congress were prepared to do. Under these circumstances it was impossible to find a common basis of agreement when the difference was on fundamentals. The Congress wanted the assurance that the Round Table Conference would begin on the assumption that Britain had conceded or was willing to concede Dominion Status to India. And Lord Irwin was not in a position to give that assurance, nor would it have been constitutional to pre-judge the eventual verdict of Parliament and thereby deprive Parliament of its sovereign power. After several efforts, the attempt to bring Congress to the conference was abandoned. The arrests of those who dabbled in Congress activities went on even as the delegation of Indians, chosen by the Viceroy to represent India, left the shores of Bombay to attend the historic conference in London, which was expected to evolve a scheme of reforms, which would satisfy Indian demands.

XXIV

EVENTFUL DAYS

WHAT HAPPENED AT THE ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE in London is too well known to bear repetition. The discussions and speeches of the British and Indian delegates are to be found in a blue paper publication, which gives the authentic story of that first Conference. But what emerged from it and what was perhaps not so widely disclosed was that without the Congress, all this discussion was futile. In spite of the ordinances the Government of India had passed, by which the Congress was made an unlawful institution and its leaders sent to prison without trial, one could not get over the fact that the Congress was still the only political organization of any consequence, which could negotiate terms on behalf of the Indian people. Without the Congress, the Round Table Conference could not be anything more than a debating society, putting forward arguments without being able to act with any authority on behalf of the Indian people.

As the first Conference was drawing to a close, two of the Indian delegates, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Mr.

Jayakar, took upon themselves the initiative of bringing the Congress delegation to London at any cost. They contacted the Government and the Congress, and pleaded with the latter to hold up all action until their return. The members of its Working Committee—those who were out of prison, could not on their own responsibility take such action and they passed a resolution, which was for private circulation only, in which they stated their inability to act in the absence of their colleagues. Somehow this resolution got into other hands and within a few days Lord Irwin published a Government Order, which came as a surprise to the people of India, as to those elsewhere, for it granted the members of the Working Committee, who were in prison an unconditional release in order to make it possible for them to negotiate with the Government the terms on which some peaceful solution of the Indian deadlock could be evolved and probably to open the way for the Congress to be represented at the Conference and its self-respect would be preserved.

Meanwhile, there occurred a national tragedy in India, which cast a veil of grief over the country. Motilal Nehru was dead. Brilliant, cultured, polished in speech and manner, fabulously rich, with a practice at the Bar which was without comparison anywhere else in India, Motilal Nehru gave up all the pomp and splendour of his mode of life to devote his time to the cause of his country and the liberation of his countrymen. Here was a man, who had all that material wealth could buy. One would have thought he could not desire anything more. And yet there was something he yearned for, something that money could not buy. It was self-respect and freedom. That was the tragedy of India. You could amass a large fortune and still not be free. When he gave up his beautiful house, his rich manner of living, his great legal practice, one began to realize what freedom meant to a man. It was an example worthy of emulation. It made the rank and file begin to think. It gave the poorer middle-class a chance of finding out that even large wealth does not make a man happy.

Motilal Nehru's work for India was confined to the intellectual sphere. He did occasionally make an appeal to the masses at Gandhi's instance, but he was not a man of the people. His mission in life, and his mission in the Congress was to educate the more enlightened form of public opinion to the nationalist way of thinking. His fight was, therefore, confined more to the Assembly and Council Hall rather than to the market-place and the villages. It was the natural counterpart of the work that was being done by men like Gandhi and Vallabhbhai Patel. Now Nehru was dead and there were not many people, who could easily fill his place in the Legislative Assembly, where by sheer brilliance he shone out as the Leader of the Opposition. Even the most hard-bitten of Civil Servants, who had risen to high office in the service of the Crown, were a little uncomfortable when facing the attack of Motilal Nehru. For pure logic and reasoning, coupled with just that right amount of emotion, the Pandit was in a class by himself. As one listened to him, one wondered why anyone hesitated to hand over the Government of India to the Indians, when there were men of the calibre, the culture, the education of Motilal Nehru.

Motilal Nehru's death damped the fighting spirit of the other leaders. India was in a mood for peace. It made the Indians realize that perhaps it would be better to achieve their objects in a more peaceful manner. There was a general feeling that if Gandhi expressed a desire to see the Viceroy, something would come out of it. It was not long before Gandhi acted on this advice. And a short letter arrived at Viceroy's House, which Lord Irwin, in his heart, had long awaited. It was to be the break of a new dawn.

A great deal has been said and written about this historic moment in our lives, which Mr. Winston Churchill was ungallant enough to refer to as "the nauseating and humiliating spectacle of this one-time Inner Temple lawyer, now seditious fakir, striding half-naked up the steps of Viceroy's Palace, there to negotiate and to parley

on equal terms with the representative of the King-Emperor." It would not add to the purpose of this book to say all that we think of this utterance of the Right Honourable Gentleman. One does not want to indulge in more abuse than is necessary in life. I will content myself with saying that there are not many people in England, who are capable of so mischievous an utterance. For it was calculated to give offence to the Indian people, and destroy whatever chance of a settlement there might have been. Mr. Churchill certainly could have had no idea what peace meant to the Indian people. Here we were, tired out and exhausted, but still fighting on till our bodies were numb with wounds, our homes shattered and the normal routine of our life destroyed. Mr. Churchill knew little of the suffering of our people. Born in the lap of luxury, with a name which brought him early in life to the high offices he held, he has that something inherently mischievous in his nature, which wants to make a mockery of the sorrows, the faith and the religion of other people. Gandhi was to India a whole religion. It was in fact the only religion that embraced the whole country, and Churchill with his utterance wanted to pollute the sanctity of an occasion, on which depended so much. As I said before, there are few people in this world who would stoop to such mischief. But India did not take his utterance too much to heart. Mr. Churchill was no longer in office and there were not many members of the House of Commons, who wanted to take the responsibility for the utterance of this then irresponsible person. We realized here in India that for the time being he was not a live force in his own country but merely a brilliant orator, who had made his speeches more for effect than out of conviction. He had a flare for making his voice heard on important political situations and could still fill the House of Commons when he addressed it. But he never knew why the members of that august assembly crowded round to hear him. It was not for their love for him or what he had to say, so much as the manner in which he said it — the vitriol, the power of speech, the invective, the abuse, the grandiloquence, the

choice phraseology, the purple patches, the perorations, which in spite of all one may say about the man, delighted the ear and sharpened one's appreciation of oratory. He was a trenchant orator, heartless, cold, calculating and without that nobility of character one would have expected from a man of his calibre. As someone said of him, he wanted that life should be one perpetual tragedy and that he should be always in the centre of it. He was a fit theme for Marlowe to handle. One has to have a world war to see him at his best as he is now — First Lord of the Admiralty.

Elsewhere in England, English people were not so offensive. There were many whose complacency was a trifle shaken at this sudden recognition of this man, Gandhi, whom they had been taught to look upon as nothing better than "a native rebel". But almost overnight the responsible sections of the press reversed their opinion of him, and elevated him to that importance which would make him worthy of a Viceregal invitation.

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Those were eventful days. Perhaps the best account of them appears in Robert Bernay's *Naked Fakir.* More than anyone else, I think, this protegé of Tom Clarke, then editor of the *News Chronicle*, has grasped the spirit of the Gandhi–Irwin meeting. Many gallani attempts have been made to describe what really transpired behind the scenes. But they must all remain wild guesses, until Gandhi or Lord Irwin can sit down one day and narrate the facts. Even so, the details of that meeting are not important. The topics, which they discussed, were fairly well known. On the one hand, Gandhi wanted a thorough inquiry into the Police atrocities and the Viceroy was trying to convince the Mahatma that this was not possible. However, what was really important, was the fact that they had met — the representative of the people and the representative of the Crown. That was the turning point in our British-Indian history. It marked an epoch, for there was to be a change in policy, and this to India was an important thing.

Day after day, while Gandhi continued to go to the Viceregal palace, one wondered what would come out of it? Would he go to England after all? Would Lord Irwin succeed? What would it feel like to have Gandhi in London? And a thousand other questions were in the air. Out of the meeting of these two great men came the Gandhi-Irwin pact. Something had at last been achieved, and it is not fit nor proper to belittle that work now, by trying to analyse who succeeded in that battle of arguments or who scored the greater number of points. It would not be the right way to look upon this historic occasion. Whoever might have won, it ended one sad chapter in our history — a chapter which but for the efforts of these two men might have ended with more sorrow and more pain and more suffering. That is what we should be grateful for.

Yet, well might it be asked, what did they achieve? Perhaps, it would be better to summarize the Gandhi–Irwin agreement, which was embodied in an official notification of the Government. This is the authentic record of the agreement, whatever may be the events that led up to it. It was the result of a fortnight's discussion during which an anxious India held its breath, wondering from day to day whether peace would come at last.

Issued from New Delhi, dated the 5th of March 1931, signed by H. W. Emerson, Secretary to Government, this notification announced that "consequent on the conversations that took place between His Excellency the Viceroy and Mr. Gandhi, it was arranged that the Civil Disobedience movement be discontinued, and that, with the approval of His Majesty's Government, certain action was to be taken by the Government of India and Local Governments. As regards constitutional questions, the scope of future discussion was stated, with the assent of His Majesty's Government, to be with the object of considering further the scheme for the constitutional Government of India discussed at the Round Table Conference. Of the scheme there outlined, Federation

was an essential part. So also are Indian responsibility and reservations or safeguards in the interests of India, for such matters as, for instance, Defence, External Affairs, the position of Minorities, the financial credit of India, and the discharge of obligations. In pursuance of the statement made by the Prime-Minister in his announcement of the 19th of January, 1931, steps were taken for the participation of the representatives of the Congress in the further discussions that took place on the scheme of constitutional reform. The settlement related to activities directly connected with the Civil Disobedience movement. Civil Disobedience was effectively discontinued and reciprocal action was taken by Government. As regards the boycott of foreign goods, there were two issues involved: firstly, the character of the boycott, and secondly, the methods employed in giving effect to it. The position of Government was as follows. They approved of the encouragement of Indian industries as part of the economic and industrial movement designed to improve the material condition of India, and they had no desire to discourage methods of propaganda, persuasion or advertisement pursued with this object in view, which did not interfere with the freedom of action of individuals, or were not prejudicial to the maintenance of law and order. But the boycott of non-Indian goods, (except of cloth, which had been applied to all foreign cloth) had been directed during the Civil Disobedience movement chiefly, if not exclusively, against British goods, and in regard to these it had been admittedly employed in order to exert pressure for political ends.

"It was accepted that a boycott of this character and organised for this purpose was not consistent with the participation of representatives of the Congress in a frank and friendly discussion of constitutional questions between representatives of British India, of the Indian States, and of His Majesty's Government and political parties in England, which the settlement was intended to secure. It is, therefore, agreed that the discontinuance of the Civil Disobedience movement connotes the definite disconti-

nuance of the employment of the boycott of British commodities as a political weapon and that, in consequence, those who had given up, during a time of political excitement, the sale or purchase of British goods must be left free without any form of restraint to change their attitude if they so desired.

"In regard to the methods employed in furtherance of the replacement of non-Indian by Indian goods or against the consumption of intoxicating liquor and drugs, resort will not be had to methods coming within the category of picketing, except within the limits permitted by the ordinary law. Such picketing was unaggressive and it did not involve coercion, intimidation, restraint, hostile demonstration, obstruction to the public, or any offence under the ordinary law. If and when any of these methods were employed in any place, the practice of picketing in that place would be suspended.

"Mr. Gandhi drew the attention of Government to specific allegations against the conduct of the Police, and represented the desirability of a public enquiry into them. In the present circumstance, Government saw great difficulty in this course and felt that it must inevitably lead to charges and counter-charges, and so militate against the re-establishment of peace. Having regard to these considerations, Mr. Gandhi agreed not to press the matter.

"Where a Local Government had moved any High Court or had initiated proceedings under the Legal Practitioners' Act in regard to the conduct of Legal Practitioners in connection with the Civil Disobedience movement, it would have made an application to the Court concerned for permission to withdraw such proceedings, provided that the alleged conduct of the person concerned did not relate to violence or incitement to violence."

The day after this agreement was made public a group of distinguished journalists representing the press of the world, interviewed the Mahatma. It was a day of triumph for him and his prestige went up in the eyes of the world. From the journalist's point of view he had

that something which in the language of the press is called "news-value." This interview elucidated much of what was embodied more formally in the notification. The questions they asked him and his answers make it possible for the layman to understand Gandhi as he was on the day after that momentous agreement.

"What is your correct interpretation of 'Purna Swaraj' ? "

"I cannot give you a proper answer as there is nothing in the English language to give the exact equivalent of 'Purna Swaraj.' 'Swaraj', in its original meaning, means 'self-rule.' Independence has no such meaning about it. 'Swaraj' means 'disciplined rule from within.' 'Purna' means 'complete.' Not finding any equivalent, we have loosely adopted the words 'Complete Independence,' which everybody understands. 'Purna Swaraj' does not exclude association with any nation, much less with England. But it can only mean association for mutual benefit, and at will."

"Would it be consistent for the Congress to reaffirm its resolution relating to full Independence ? "

"Yes; decidedly. Because there is nothing to prevent the Congress at Karachi passing a similar resolution, and, what is more, pressing that at the forthcoming R.T.C. I am betraying no secret by telling you that I took good care to ascertain that position and to make my own position clear before agreeing to the settlement."

"Will you participate formally in the Conference ?"

"I hope to. In fact, it is 'HIGHLY LIKELY.' "

"Will you press for 'Purna Swaraj' at the Conference?'

"We shall deny our very existence if we do not press for it."

"Will you accept the present safeguards and reservations ? "'

"Not the present safeguards and reservations. Truly, in this respect the Congress position has been made clear to the world, and whoever invites the Congress to a political conference is expected to know what the Congress stands for. I have taken as much precaution as my being

is capable of, to make the Congress position clear, and knowing that it is even now open to His Majesty's Government not to invite the Congress to participate in the Conference. There is nothing in the settlement, as I read it, to compel that participation."

"What was that which turned the tide of negotiations when things became hopeless on Saturday ? "

"Goodness on the part of Lord Irwin and, perhaps, equal goodness on my part as well."

"So you regard the present agreement to be the greatest achievement of your life, to your credit, so far ?"

"I do not know what great achievements there are to my credit so far, and if this is one of them."

"If you could attain 'Purna Swaraj' would you consider that such an achievement ? "

"I think, if that comes, I should certainly consider it as such."

"Do you hope to achieve 'Purna Swaraj' in your lifetime ?

"I do look for it most decidedly. I still consider myself a young man of sixty-two according to Western notions."

"Would you be prepared to admit any safeguards in the future Constitution ? "

"Yes. Those that are reasonable and wise. Take, for example, the question of Minorities. I can understand that we cannot achieve our purpose as a great nation, if we do not regard the rights of Minorities as a sacred trust. I should regard that as a legitimate safeguard."

"What about Army and Finance ? "

"Finance, yes. That is to say, if we have a Public Debt, as we have, so much as falls to our lot will have to be secured. To that extent I would be bound in honour to entertain safeguards for the country's credit and her consequent expansion. With reference to the Army, so far as my intelligence takes me, I cannot think of any safeguards except this, that we should guarantee the pay and the fulfilment of any other condition we might have

undertaken to fulfil in connection with British soldiers required for the sake of India. That I can well understand."

"Will you repudiate India's debts ?"

"I will not repudiate one single farthing that can be legitimately debited to us. But unfortunately there has been a great deal of confusion about this talk of repudiation. The Congress has never sought to repudiate a single rupee of the national obligation. But what the Congress has asked for, and will insist upon, is the justness of the obligation that might be sought to be imposed on a future Government, even as a buyer would like to know what obligation is undertaken when entering on a new purchase. The Congress has suggested that in case there can be no adjustments, an independent tribunal may be appointed."

"Do you think the League of Nations a proper tribunal ?"

"So far as I can say off-hand, the League of Nations is a proper tribunal. But the League of Nations may not undertake such a responsibility. Besides, England may not like such a tribunal. Any tribunal agreeable, therefore, to England and India would be acceptable to me."

"Will you press this question at the Round Table Conference ?"'

"It will be necessary to do so when the question of examination and acceptance of national obligations comes up. You may say, in other words, that these obligations will be taken up subject to national audit."

"Does this provisional settlement represent the practical application of the Sermon on the Mount ?"

"I do not think I can judge. It is for the critics to judge how far this has been done."

"Do you think boycott of foreign cloth should be relaxed as a result of the settlement ?

"On the contrary, no. The boycott of foreign cloth is not a political weapon, but is intended for the promotion of the universal supplementary industry of India —

the Charkha. Its activity is wholly in connection with importation of foreign cloth. If I had the reins of Government, I would certainly resort to high protective tariff. I consider such protective tariff possible even by the present Government. The present duties that have been imposed are, however, not prohibitive but merely revenue duties for economic purposes.

"What is your idea of 'Purna Swaraj' ?"

"I am a visionary and, therefore, picture to myself all kinds of things that have no reality about them. 'Purna Swaraj' is not incompatible with, but is based upon, complete equality. The popular mind cannot conceive of that equality. By equality I mean that instead of Downing Street being the centre of Imperial activity, Delhi should be the centre. Friends suggest that England may not accommodate herself to that position. The British are a practical people and as they love liberty for themselves, it is only a step further to have liberty for others. I know, if the time comes to concede the equality I want for India, they will say that is what they have all along desired. The British people have a faculty of self-delusion as no other people have. Yes, to my mind equality means the right to secede."

"Do you prefer the English people as a governing race to other races ?"

"I have no choice to make. I do not want to be governed but by myself."

"Would you like to have 'Purna Swaraj' under the British flag ?"

"Not under this flag. Under a common flag, if possible; under a separate national flag, if necessary."

"Do you expect to solve the Hindu-Muslim question before you go to the Conference ?"

"That is my desire, but I do not know how far I can realise it. At present, I do not think it will be worth while our going to the Conference without solving this question. I do not think unity can be brought about at the Conference." '

" Will it take years to bring about Hindu-Muslim unity ? "

" I do not think so. There is no disunity among the Hindu and Muslim masses. The disunity is at the surface, and this counts so much, since those who are at the surface are the people who represent the political mind of India."

" Do you envisage the possibility of doing away with a national Army when 'Purna Swaraj' is obtained ? "

" As a visionary, yes. But I do not think it is possible for me to see it during my lifetime. It may take ages before the Indian nation may accommodate itself to having no army at all. It is possible my want of faith may account for this pessimism on my part. But I do not exclude such a possibility. No one was prepared for the present mass awakening and the strict adherence to non-violence — aberrations notwithstanding — on the part of the people, and that certainly fills me with some hope that Indian leaders will be courageous enough in the near future, when they will be able to say that they do not need to have any army. For civil purposes, the police may be considered sufficient."

" Do you not fear a Bolshevik invasion in the near future ? "

" I have no such fear."

" Are you not afraid of Bolshevik propaganda spreading into India ? "

" I do not think the Indian people are so gullible."

" What good do you see in Bolshevism ? "

" I have not really studied Bolshevism to that extent. If there is anything good in it, India should have no hesitation to take it and adopt it as its own."

" Would you agree to become the Prime-Minister of the future Government ?

No. It will be reserved for younger minds and stouter hands."

"Supposing the people want you and insist ? "

" I will seek shelter behind journalists like you."

" Will you abolish all machinery if 'Purna Swaraj' is achieved ? "

" Not a bit. Far from abolishing it, I am likely to order much more from America, and who knows I may give preference to British machinery instead ? "

" Will you return to the Ashram before Swaraj is attained ? "

" No, I propose to see the Ashram but will not live at the Ashram till my vow of 'Purna Swaraj' is fulfilled."

" Do you not envisage the possibility of non-violence becoming an effective weapon in solving international complications ? "

" I consider that non-violence will become such a weapon, supposing that the army is in India, as there may be in other nations in the world. First, there is a change in ideas. Action is a slow process. Nations will rely more and more on consultation and arbitration, and progressively less and less on armies. Armies may gradually be reduced to spectacular things, just as toys, remnants of something that is past and not as instruments of protection of the nation."

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Soon Lord Irwin left. His term of office was over. He had done enough in the last year of his Viceroyalty to leave his mark behind. He had promulgated more ordinances than any other Viceroy before him, but he had shown a spirit towards the Indian people which marked him out as a man, different from the others. When many of the landmarks which have been thrust upon us, in the shape of statues and monuments, will come down in a free India, there will be a few that we will still keep, and I think one can say with reasonable certainty, that of Lord Irwin which stands at New Delhi will remain with us. He may have fought on the other side, but he fought cleanly and squarely. He was a gentleman to the tips of his fingers, and even the most nationalist among the Indians would like some memory of this Yorkshire Christian, who came our way. I feel that he loved this country with the same zest as he loved his own.

He tried to understand it, when others in his position would have been content to crush it with armed force. He fought within himself the grim struggle of the Christian and the Viceroy. It is for the brief moments in which the greater Christian in him triumphed that we shall never forget him.

And so with the tide he ebbed away. He had just seen Gandhi once more before he left. Under the cold stone of the Gateway, the people of India saw him for the last time. He had done one thing for his countrymen who were in India. He had made them, like him, unafraid of expressing their sympathy.

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The P. and O. liner had gone out of sight and a new regime in India began. No more inappropriate person could have been chosen to succeed Lord Irwin than Lord Willingdon. It was so obvious an error of choice that one wonders why no one from among His Majesty's advisers saw the mistake that was being made. Almost in an instant the atmosphere in India was changed. One realized all too painfully that the Willingdons at Delhi would be ever more artificial than the Willingdons at Madras and Bombay. Lady Willingdon would now be Vicereine. Often I wonder whether in the making of these great appointments of State, the wives of the officials are taken into consideration. Because I feel that among the Viceregal regimes in India, Lady Willingdon must somewhere find a place. So much was she a part of Viceroy's House, that one could not fail to overlook her.

The Willingdons brought back with them the unwholesome atmosphere of domination over India. If they had fitted into the scheme of things during their other terms of office in India, they were now anachronisms in the India to which they had returned. More pompous than ever, more unreal after their long stays in the Government Houses of the Empire, more unsympathetic, more dictatorial, they killed in one brief hour all the friendliness which Lord Irwin had created in five long

years. Who cared now whether mauve was her Ladyship's favourite colour ? Who cared whether Lord Willingdon still wore his brown and white shoes ? And yet these still seemed as much a part of the Willingdons as they ever were. In fact we began to understand what exaggerated importance we had attached to these trifles. Elaborate ritual and pageantry, for which the Indian had to pay in the end, no longer impressed the Indian. The needs of India were different. And what was more, this new India to which they had come back was capable of expressing itself more forcefully than ever before.

The first great mistake that Lord Willingdon made was to omit to see Gandhi. It was against all expectations, specially as Gandhi was in Bombay at that time. It may have been that Lord Willingdon was only carrying out instructions from Whitehall, but wherever the blame lay, a definite change of policy had taken place as one Viceroy left and another arrived. It was going back to the theory that Gandhi was only one leader among the innumerable leaders in India. Yet he was the only one who could deliver the goods. One remembered the vague gestures of Lord Willingdon as Governor of Bombay, when he had told Gandhi that Government House would always be open to him. A decade had passed and if Lord Willingdon had grown in importance since then and become a Viceroy while he was only a Governor before, the importance of Gandhi in India had increased a hundred fold or more. Lord Willingdon was far too shortsighted to see beyond the tip of his nose.

With the coming of Lord Willingdon, the old trouble began. There was evidence gathering in every town in India which showed that everything possible was being done to undo the good that had been done by the Gandhi-Irwin pact. There were flagrant breaches of the pact till the climax was reached when the peasants of Bardoli asked for time to pay the one lac of land revenue remaining over from a debt of twenty-two lacs which they had already paid. The coercive methods adopted by the

Government made Gandhi write to the Government of Bombay, only to receive the stereotyped rebuff of officialdom. Not satisfied with this reply Gandhi wrote to the headquarters of the Government and his letter to the Home Secretary is a remarkable piece of literature. In it he says:

"You might be unable to interfere with the working or not working of the settlement by Local Governments, or your interference may not go far enough according to my view of the settlement. The time has, therefore, perhaps arrived for the appointment of a permanent board of arbitration to decide questions of interpretation of the settlement and as to the full carrying out of terms by the one party or the other. I would, therefore, like you to consider this suggestion."

Really this man Gandhi was going a bit too far, the Englishman in India thought. It was one thing if the English gave something to the Indians out of grace, even if it was freedom that they wanted, but one had to put one's foot down when they started talking about impartial tribunals as of right. Was not the Government of India impartial enough? That was the gist of the Government's reply, if not expressed in so many words. As Gandhi wired finally on August 11...."In naked terms, this means that the Government should be both the prosecutor and the judge with reference to matters arising out of a contract to which they and the complainants are parties. This is impossible for the Congress to accept." In this telegram he gave indication of his inability to keep to his promise of sailing for England to represent the Congress at the Conference. The Viceroy was not much moved. Anglo-India rejoiced once more. It is what they were waiting for. Lord Willingdon had fulfilled the prophecy. As Gandhi put it in a public utterance, "The great civilians here do not want me to attend the Conference, or if they do, they do so under circumstances which a national organisation like the Congress can never tolerate."

That was the point Gandhi made emphatically clear. It was not that he wanted to shirk going to the Conference, he said time and again, nor had he at any time insisted upon a Board of Arbitration, nor was he trying to set himself up at the head of a parallel Government. He, therefore, explained his point of view to the Viceroy and asked if the pact was at an end. The Congress and Gandhi were still very keen on its observance. London had also realized how barren the Round Table Conference would be without any Congress representation. So Lord Willingdon switched on his best diplomacy, said that Gandhi had failed to observe the pact by declining to go to the Conference, and made a gesture of peace by promising to refrain from adopting special measures. Gandhi saw the opening for peace, wired for an interview and before long a special train was on its way to Bombay to enable Gandhi to sail on the first available boat for England. And so the name of M. K. Gandhi appeared on the passengers list–HOMEWARD BOUND.

His departure from Bombay was like a royal departure, when Kings were Kings in this ancient land of ours. At Aden they hoisted the Indian National Flag for him. At Port Said, he received from the people of Egypt a genuine and touching message. And so it was at Marseilles and Victoria. No Viceroy has landed on the shores of his own England and caused so much excitement. He went, however, to live in the East End, midst the squalor and poverty of the great metropolis — this representative of the Indian people, this essentially poor man of India. He had not changed one bit. Even as he went up the steps of Buckingham Palace to meet His Majesty, the flunkeys of the royal Court must have wondered how times had changed that the "naked fakir" had at last come to speak with the King. He wore no court dress for the occasion. He went in a loin cloth and a shawl as was his wont. And so amidst much excitement and preparations for a general election, the second Round Table Conference began.

Gandhi's was the most anxiously awaited speech at the opening. Not one jot ruffled by triumph or excitement, he delivered it in his usual cool, dignified manner. He was almost apologetic when others would in his place have blustered loud. He said :

"I am but a poor humble agent acting on behalf of the Indian National Congress; and it might be as well to remind ourselves of what the Congress stands for and what it is. You will then extend your sympathy to me, because I know that the burden that rests upon my shoulders is really very great. The Congress is, if I am not mistaken, the oldest political organisation we have in India. It has had nearly 50 years of life, during which period it has, without any interruption, held its annual session. It is what it means — national. It represents no particular community, no particular class, no particular interest. It claims to represent all Indian interests and all classes. It is a matter of the greatest pleasure to me to state that it was first conceived in an English brain. Allan Octavian Hume we knew as the Father of the Congress. It was nursed by the great Parsees, Pherozeshah Mehta, and Dadabhai Naoroji, whom all India delighted to recognise as its Grand Old Man. From the very commencement the Congress had Mussalmans, Christians, Anglo-Indians, I might say, all religions, sects, creeds, represented upon it more or less fully. The late Budruddin Tyabji identified himself with the Congress. We have had Mussalmans as Presidents of the Congress, and Parsees too. I can recall at least one Indian Christian at the present moment. Kali Charan Banerjee (an Indian Christian), than whom I have not had the privilege of knowing a purer Indian, was also thoroughly identified with the Congress. I miss, as I have no doubt all of you miss, the presence in our midst of Mr. K. T. Paul. Although, I do not know, but so far as I know, he never officially belonged to the Congress, he was a nationalist to the full.

"As you know, the late Maulana Mahomed Ali whose presence also we miss to-day, was a President of the

Congress, and at present we have four Mussalmans as members of the Working Committee which consists of 15 members. We have had women as our Presidents; Dr. Annie Besant was the first, and Mrs. Sarojini Naidu followed. We have her as a member of the Working Committee also; and so, if we have no distinctions of class or creed, we have no distinctions of sex either.

"The Congress has from its very commencement taken up the cause of the so-called 'untouchables.' There was a time when the Congress had at every annual session, as its adjunct, the Social Conference, to which the late Ranade had dedicated his energies, among his many activities. Headed by him, you will find in the programme of the Social Conference, reforms in connection with the untouchables taking a prominent place. But in 1920, the Congress took a larger step and brought the question of removal of untouchability as a plank on the political platform, and made it an important item of the political programme. Just as the Congress considered Hindu-Muslim unity, thereby meaning unity amongst all the classes, to be indispensable for the attainment of Swaraj, so also did the Congress consider the removal of the curse of untouchability as an indispensable condition for the attainment of full freedom.

"The position the Congress took up in 1920 remains the same to-day, and so you will see that the Congress has attempted from its very beginning to be what it has described itself to be, namely, national in every sense of the term. If your Highnesses will permit me to say so, in the very early stages, the Congress took up your cause also. Let me remind this Committee that it was the G. O. M. of India who sponsored the cause of Kashmir and Mysore, and these two great Houses, I venture in all humility to submit, owe not a little to the efforts of Dadabhai Naoroji and the Congress.

"Even up to now the Congress has endeavoured to serve the Princes of India by refraining from any interference in their domestic and internal affairs. I hope, therefore, that this brief introduction that I thought fit to

give will serve to enable the Sub-Committee and those who are at all interested in the claims of the Congress, to understand that it has endeavoured to deserve the claim that it has made. It has failed, I know, often to live up to the claim, but I venture to submit, that if you were to examine the history of the Congress you would find that it has more often succeeded, and progressively succeeded than failed.

"Above all the Congress represents, in its essence, the dumb semi-starved millions scattered over the length and breadth of the land in its 7,00,000 villages, no matter whether they come from what is called British India, or what is called Indian India. Every interest which, in the opinion of the Congress, is worthy of protection, has to subserve this interest, and if there is a genuine real clash I have no hesitation in saying on behalf of the Congress that the Congress will sacrifice every interest for the sake of the interest of these dumb millions. It is, therefore, essentially a peasant organization, and it is becoming so progressively. You, and even the Indian members of the Sub-Committee, will perhaps be astonished to find that to-day the Congress, through its organization, the All-India Spinners' Association, is finding work for nearly 50,000 women in nearly 2,000 villages, and these women are possibly 50 per cent. Mussalman women. Thousands of them belong to the so-called untouchable class. We have thus, in this constructive manner, penetrated these villages and the effort is being made to cover every one of the 7,00,000 villages. It is a superhuman task, but if human effort can do so, you will presently find the Congress covering all of these villages and bringing to them the message of the spinning wheel."

Yet somehow, Gandhi in London was a disappointment. He did not fit into the scheme of things. His dress, his manner, his thought, his mode of life were so different from his surroundings that the incongruity of the situation obscured everything else. Somehow too cast in a civilization so foreign to him, he showed signs of discomfort. He was not happy about his arrival. Perhaps

t would have been better if he had not come at all. That the Round Table Conference would never satisfy him was a foregone conclusion. That he should have walked into the failure with his eyes wide open, made his position a little untenable. He had come to England as the sole representative of the Congress, and one wished he had not shouldered so much responsibility. Much better if he had remained a symbol of the Congress and of India, rather than to have taken on the role of delegate, which he could neither play to his satisfaction, nor to the satisfaction of those, who were his fellow delegates. That was the great mistake he committed. By being equal with the others, he laid himself open to attack, which was unavoidable. Looking back on it, I wonder whether he regrets it now. But in the excitement of the hour and with his desire for peace, who can blame the man ?

To the common people of England, Gandhi was only an amusing sight. What they read about him in their national papers did not help to change their opinion. The correspondent of one important London daily said : "Today I saw Mahatma Gandhi walking down the Mall with his loin-cloth wrapped around his head." That was the danger to which the British public necessarily exposed itself. Lack of knowledge on their part was probably excusable, but gross mis-statements, exaggerations, untruths fabricated by those who were specially deputed to cover Indian news, was ungallant and from the point of view of the Indian people, who suffered thereby, it was most unfortunate.

Moreover, the general election in England was beginning to attract the attention of the English people. The Labour Government of Mr. Macdonald was soon to go out and England was to see the lessee of 10, Downing Street leave by one door as Labour Prime Minister and return by the other on a National ticket. England was under such circumstances in no frame of mind to bother about the internal problems of India.

However, the point on which this second Conference revolved, was the representation to be given to the depressed classes. In the hierarchy of caste, these untouchables were at the bottom of the ladder. Years of prejudice had brought this isolation upon them, and years of foreign rule had perpetuated it. Unless something was done at this crucial stage of the new reforms, untouchability would become a permanent institution.

There were two conflicting theories on untouchability. The moot point was which of the two parties should be trusted. It was said on the one hand that in a predominantly caste-Hindu India, some provision would have to be made to safeguard this "minority", who had suffered much at the hands of its co-religionists. If Britain was to leave India to the caste Hindus, who were in majority, it was incumbent upon it to make some provision for those who constituted the depressed classes and who would be routed as the Jews were in Nazi Germany. Therefore, the untouchables must have special representation. They must be assured of a certain fixed number of seats if only that the voice of the untouchable could be heard in the legislatures of the country. That way, some thought, the depressed classes would in time become a community with free and equal rights. Gandhi took another view. He would not agree to special representation, for this would perpetuate their "depressed" condition and make it impossible for the untouchables to be absorbed into the greater Hindu community to which they belonged and from which they originated. To relegate them to the status of a minority was to give official recognition to a distinction in social class, which had originated through an unfortunate combination of circumstances and superstitions and which it was his ambition to eradicate from its roots.

These were in brief the two main theories for the removal of untouchability in India. The question was— — could the *harijan* in the face of what he had suffered in the past put that implicit faith in his caste–brother, which Gandhi would have him do ? This was a question which could not be answered abstractly. It was for the individual,

who had suffered, to decide for himself which course he would rather follow. It does not admit of logic or reasoning, so much as of faith and trust, and it seemed that with all the influence Gandhi wielded over Hindu India, there was sufficient justification for the untouchable to apprehend the results of a complete surrender to the caste Hindu. They could trust Gandhi and perhaps Nehru and some of the others in the Congress fold. But what about the rest ? What would happen to the untouchables when the caste Hindus came to power ? Some of them were such orthodox people, that they felt an instinctive aversion to mixing with the *harijans*. It was something more than the superciliousness which makes two Oxford men smile at the presence in their midst of a Reading Scholar. It was something that penetrated deeper into the skin — something in line with the colour bar, the Nordic Aryan's hatred for the Semite, the Anglo-Saxon's nostalgia at the sight of a slimy Latin, or a Frenchman's contempt for a drunken Englishman. These are some of the real dislikes of mankind. That of the caste Hindu for the *harijan* was likewise a major dislike of man for man.

As the arguments shaped at the Conference, it soon became obvious that it would come to no agreement. Ramsay Macdonald then stepped in at the dramatic moment, said that he would undertake to make an award, if all the delegates would put their signature to his award and with a flourish of trumpets, though without the assent of the delegates, he closed down the Conference, giving the "privilege" to Gandhi to move a vote of thanks to the Chair ! " We have come," said Gandhi, " to the parting of the ways. I do not know in what direction my path would lie, but it does not matter to me. Even though I may have to go in an exactly opposite direction, you are still entitled to a vote of thanks from the bottom of my heart." Abruptly the Conference ended. The internal problems of Great Britain were so urgent that India soon became a secondary affair. So much more was at stake in England itself. Parties, policies, prime

ministers were likely to change. Could they really be concerned at such a time about India ?

The presence of Gandhi in London had done little for India and far less for England. It had given the Government the breathing space they required to make the change from the policy of Irwin to that of Willingdon without making the consequent breach of the settlement too obvious. It gave a chance to the Government to say "You see we told you so." They had created sufficient proof to show that there were internal factions in India and these warring communities could only be held together under the flag of Britain and by the terror of its booming guns. *Divide et impera !* " Divide, my son, and you will still rule", the Englishman said to his son.

Gandhi was on his way back. The situation was more serious than he had allowed himself to believe. The children of the East End interested him perhaps a little more than they should have and one waited with impatience for him to give the word, while he was still writing his farewells from the ship to these dead-end kids. The year was drawing to a close and with it the news from India became graver and graver. The strong hand-in-the-velvet glove was brought into action again and Willingdon was gathering up all the rope he had allowed Gandhi and the Congress. Before Gandhi arrived on the shores of India, there was a general round-up, in which they arrested among others the great frontier figure, Abdul Gaffar Khan, and Jawaharlal Nehru. When the ship came alongside the Ballard Pier, Gandhi had little idea of the trouble that awaited him.

I remember my father describing to me the scene at Ballard Pier. He had gone to the Mole in his official capacity — as the man in charge of His Majesty's Customs. He saw the crowds that had gathered to receive the Mahatma on his return — crowds such as he was not accustomed to see. He watched the Mahatma on deck, waving to his friends ashore. Gandhi was in high spirits and hardly knew what had happened in his absence. The more depressing news had been withheld from him.

Then the gangway was put up and Gandhi's intimate friends were allowed on board. He greeted them and seemed full of life, like a man who had returned from a beautiful holiday and was still oblivious of his return to reality. Suddenly he broke away from the group of friends on deck. He stood alone — a solemn, morose figure looking blankly into space and down on to people below. His thoughts were far away. All the joy had vanished from his face and his eyes did not sparkle any more. The trouble in India had begun once again.

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It is not necessary to repeat it all over again. By now it had become the usual story of strong measures on the one hand and stronger determination to resist them on the other. The break had inevitably to follow. It was unnecessarily preceeded by lengthy correspondence on both sides, which was bound to lead nowhere except to the end which both had in view. India and Britain had now become two distinct quantities. India was no longer a minor disturbance in the Empire. An entire nation had to be reconciled with.

The Government had said that Abdul Gaffar Khan was plotting to overthrow the British and as evidence they put forward his refusal to attend a Durbar on the North West Frontier. If that was evidence, one could have gone all over the country and found a thousand plots hatching for the overthrow of the Empire. But the real trouble was that Britain was afraid of losing its hold over vested interests in India. Already too much had been risked in getting Gandhi to England and the change in the personnel of the British Government gave immediate effect to a quick reversion to the pre-Irwin policy of the strong-hand-in-the-velvet-glove. There were not many Englishmen in India, who could say as Lord Irwin had, when he left India: "I can wish India nothing better, and so I would say to you, and to all those in this country that I have tried to serve — 'In your thinking, in your speaking, in your doing: God be with you.'" Lord Irwin had really tried to understand India,

but he did not carry with him the rest of his tribe. A letter circulated confidentially by one of the representatives of the European commercial community at the Conference tells the true story of the failure of this conference — a sordid, mean tale which reflects little to the credit of the Englishman. This letter is better known as the Benthall Circular, It read: "We went to London determined to achieve some settlement if we could, but our determination in that regard was tempered with an equal determination that there should be no giving way on any essential part of the policy agreed to by the (European) Associated Chambers of Commerce in regard to financial and commercial safeguards, and by the European Association on general policy. It was obvious to us, and we had it in mind throughout the Conference, that the united forces of the Congress, the Hindu Sabha and the (Indian) Federated Chambers of Commerce would be directed towards whittling down the safeguards already proposed.

"If you look at the results of this last session, you will see that Gandhi and the (Indian) Federated Chambers are unable to point to a single concession wrung from the British Government as the result of their visit to St. James's Palace. He landed in India with empty hands.

" There was another incident, too, which did him no good. He undertook to settle the communal problem and failed before all the world.

" The Muslims were a solid and enthusiastic team: Ali Imam, the nationalist Muslim, caused no division. They played their cards with great skill throughout; they promised us support and they gave it in full measure. In return they asked us that we should not forget their economic plight in Bengal and we should 'without pampering them' do what we can to find places for them in European firms so that they may have a chance to improve their material position and the general standing of their community.

" On the whole, there was one policy o. the British nation and the British community in India, and that was to make up our minds on a national policy and to stick to

it. But after the general elections, the right wing of the Government made up its mind to break up the Conference and to fight the Congress. The Muslims, who do not want responsibility at the Centre, were delighted. Government undoubtedly changed their policy and tried to get away with provincial autonomy, with a promise of Central reforms. We had made up our minds that the fight with the Congress was inevitable; we felt and said that the sooner it came the better, but we made up our minds that for a crushing success we should have all possible friends on our side. The Muslims were alright; the Minorities Pact and Government's general attitude ensured that. So were the Princes and the Minorities.

"The important thing to us seemed to be to carry the Hindu-in-the-street as represented by such people as Sapru, Jayakar, Patro and others. If we could not get them to fight the Congress, we could at least ensure that they would not back the Congress, and that, by one simple method of leaving no doubt in their minds that there was to be no going back on the Federal scheme which broadly was also the accepted policy of the European community, and we acted accordingly. We pressed upon the Government that the one substantial earnest of good faith which would satisfy these people was to bring in the Provincial and Central constitutions in one place. Provincial autonomy could not be forced upon India; the Muslims alone could not work it. Congress Provinces facing a bitter Centre present grave political difficulties; each province would be a Calcutta Corporation on its own. So we joined with strange companions; Government saw the arguments, and the Conference, instead of breaking up in disorder with 100 per cent. of Hindu political India against us, ended in promises of co-operation by 99 per cent of the Conference, including even such people as Malaviya, while Gandhi himself was indisposed to join the Standing Committee.

"The Muslims have become firm allies of the Europeans. They are very satisfied with their own position and are prepared to work with us.

"It must not, however, be supposed that when we agree that reforms are necessary, we advocate democratic reform in every province. All that we mean is such change in the system of Government as will improve its efficiency."

This was the sort of thing that nationalist India had to contend with. First the treachery of those who would fight to the bitter end with all the resources at their command to preserve their hold over India. Then the gullibility of those minorities, who never realised that the Government were making stooges of them. If ever there was one great Empire-building slogan to which we had no answer it was "Divide and Rule." Somehow that was as true now as it was when it was coined. Yes, Britain always succeeded in the policy of divide and rule, because we had got into the vicious circle of having no unity because we were not free and of not being free because we had no unity. The odds against the Indians were great and many believed that swaraj would never come within their lifetime. Who could take the long view that at least our children would be born free? Posterity was such a chilly prospect.

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Sometimes I have wondered why out of the British connection so much pain has come. More than any other race the Indians are a docile people. They are usually content to serve.

The idea of Empire is not restricted to the British. But elsewhere the conquered have merged into the bloodstream of the conquerors. The British would never allow that.

I remember reading somewhere of a little episode which I have never forgotten. In the twenties France had completed the colonization of Morocco and added new territory to its Empire. This was part of the great colonial plan which Marshal Lyautay had in mind. But Lyautay believed that colonization should be something different from conquest. The one implied absorption, the other the imposition of might. Some years passed

and a great banquet in Paris was given to the Marshal. To this banquet were invited representative people from every corner of the French Republic. To it also came the great chiefs of Morocco. It was a historic and momentous occasion in the history of France. Many speeches were made that day, but the most dramatic moment of the evening came when one of the Moroccan chiefs got up to speak. Midst the silence that followed the applause, he began : "Moi, je suis francais." And the applause broke out again. For the French people this sentence had great significance. A conquered nation – or to be more precise, a colonized nation – had merged into the national stream of the French Republic. What was so magnificent about this utterance was its spontaneity and its undoubted sincerity. Those who have seen a French colonial walk down the Champses Elysèes, feeling as if it belonged to him, will realise what I am trying to say. That is one of the great things we coloured men will always say for the French People. The French do not pretend, but they have the same respect for a negro of a French colony as they have for the most blue-blooded of Frenchmen. "Il n'y a pas de couleur dans le loi francais." There is no such thing as colour in the law of France, nor any other distinction.

Our Indian Maharajahs have attempted to emulate the Moroccan Chief. Not so long ago, when war threatened in Europe, and when the Congress and the people of India had expressed doubts of participating in such a war one of the Indian Maharajahs sent a striking message of loyalty to the King, which was splashed over the front pages of all the English papers. But it was hardly the same thing, because it was so obviously for effect. One rightly asked what difference it would make to Britain if one Indian Maharajah was ready to fight on its side, when the rest of India would stand aloof. And how would he fight and with what ? What had Indian Maharajahs ever done, that they could now turn the scales in a great European War ? The point was rather— what would the *people* of India do ? Would they in the

hour of crisis feel and say: "We too are English" ? Could they pretend to say it ? I am afraid not. That is the difference. It is the difference between absorption and conquest, and we will always remain conscious that the British come to us only as conquerors.

The English way of entertainment, as compared with the French, has chiefly been confined to arrests and detention during His Majesty's pleasure in His Majesty's Prisons. Not quite the sort of atmosphere where a guest could say "Moi, je suis anglais." Gandhi was accustomed to these fluctuations of fortune — from being the guest of the British people in London to being their guest in prison in India. Between his landing on the shores of India and his arrest and detention, scarcely a week had passed. How fickle was the generosity of Britain !

XXV

UNTO DEATH

Two months passed and as Pyarelal says in his book: * "The light came at last in a flash." I quote these sentimental words because India reacts like that to the Mahatma. One talks in terms of light and darkness as one would only of a superman. It shows how this country had begun to respect the ordinary matter-of-fact decisions of Gandhi as if they were inspired by divine motivation. Perhaps they were so inspired. One could never be quite sure. As a result of this "flash of light" he wrote to Secretary of State, Samuel Hoare, and expressed his determination to fast unto death if separate electorates were created for the depressed classes when His Majesty's Government made its "award." It is now known that when the Prime Minister made the award, not much attention was paid to Gandhi's letter. Gandhi had given the British Government a month's notice, at the end of which he launched out on his epic fast. It was a daring challenge by a man, no longer in his youth, to a

* "The Epic Fast."

nation that had so long harboured a great social crime. It was also a challenge to Britain, for he wanted to show the British that his word still counted for something in India.

You ought to have seen the country on the morning of September the 20th — touched as it were by a spark, electrified into action, unified at one call from him. All over India there was fasting and prayer. The high-lights of the Congress were to follow his example if only as a day's self-purification. Said Gandhi that morning in a statement: "This may look childish to the onlookers, but not so to me. If I had anything more to give, I would throw in that also to remove this curse, but I have nothing more than my life." And he meant it. The question that arises from Gandhi's fasts is: Is this fast not a form of coercion? It is the Gandhian view that it is not. "Love compels; it does not coerce." Many of us cannot appreciate that point of view. When a man of his importance in India threatens to fast to death, then that fast in so far as the Indian people are concerned, is as coercive as the presence of a million armed men on any of the frontiers of Europe. Only the language of it is different. No man nor body of men could live down the blame of being responsible for the death of a man like Gandhi, by declining to alter his position for Gandhi's sake.

Yet this coercive fasting is not inconsistent with the doctrine of Satyagraha. Satyagraha has been defined, time and again, as non-violent but active resistance. But it is resistance all the same. The circumstances of Gandhi's case make it a coercive measure. But the orthodox Gandhian point of view still maintains that fasting is in no way coercive. It is a question of interpretation and one cannot deny him the right to interpret his own philosophy.

While on the subject of the coercive nature of a Gandhian fast, the more recent Rajkot affair must not be overlooked. Briefly let us review the events that preceded the fast. There had been a move in the Indian States to demand for the people of the States a reasonable measure

of representation, so that when Federation came into effect, the people of the states, like the people of British India would have a say in the conduct of affairs of the government of the country. Under the Federal scheme, no provision had been made to safeguard the interests of the States' people, nor could the British Government, who have no sovereignty over the States, have compelled the Indian rulers to divest themselves of a part of their sovereign rights. Under the circumstances such rights as the people of the States might acquire in a Federal India could come to them only if they fought for it themselves. The organization in the Indian States, which corresponded to that of the Congress in India is known as the Praja Mandal. The latter is, of course, a less known and less influential body. But it works in conjunction with the Indian States' Peoples Committee of the Congress and is in fact guided by it. Gandhi and Vallabhbhai Patel had recently turned their attention to the States' question. Rajkot was made a test case. It was symbolic of the struggle of the people of an Indian State. There had been much exchange of correspondence between the Sardar and the Thakore Saheb of Rajkot. As a result of correspondence and of personal meetings, an agreement had been arrived at, which was accepted by both parties. There was to be no struggle in Rajkot. Later, however, influenced by his right-hand man, Virawala, the Thakore Saheb wanted to retract from the position to which he had committed himself. The situation was very difficult, because basically it was a gentleman's agreement, binding morally, though not legally. This breaking of the Thakore Saheb's word was enough to make Gandhi fast on the Rajkot issue. He could see no other way of compelling, by love or by force, the Thakore Saheb to keep his pledge. So Gandhi's fast began. Chronologically it does not belong to this part of the book. In point of time it belongs to the period, which followed the acceptance of office by the Congress. Not many days, therefore, were allowed to pass before the whole press and public opinion of the country almost unanimously suggest-

ed that it was a case in which the paramount power, (which term is now used in India for the British Government in relation to the Indian States) should interfere. The Viceroy stepped into the controversy and he recommended arbitration by Sir Maurice Gwyer, the Chief Justice of the Federal Court. Couched as it was in the form of a Viceregal suggestion, it left the Thakore Saheb no alternative but to accept. It was the wish of the paramount power. The Thakore Saheb accepted the Viceroy's suggestion. He had no other alternative. And Gandhi broke his fast. Sir Maurice Gwyer decided in favour of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in his interpretation of the terms of the agreement, which he pronounced a completed agreement. Virawala, however, played his last cards rather well. He was not a man who cared for Gandhi. Gandhi's fast had undoubtedly brought Rajkot into notorious prominence and Virawala, who was not afraid of the consequences, created ingenious obstacles and the matter came to a standstill. Suddenly Gandhi took the country by surprise by announcing his decision to renounce the Gwyer Award. He gave as his reason that although his fast in itself was not coercive, his appeal to the paramount power and his acceptance of that help was tantamount to bringing coercion to bear upon the Thakore Saheb. This is a very subtle interpretation of his philosophy of non-violence. On the one hand he still maintained that fasting was not in itself coercive but only that in the Rajkot affair his end was achieved not by a change of heart or by love-compulsion, but by the sanction of force, which was embodied in the Viceroy's suggestion.

That is the Gandhian interpretation of the Rajkot fast. A certain sense of modesty as to his own greatness and his growing power over this country precludes him from seeing the other point of view. Though fasting under normal circumstances may not amount to coercion, the sanction behind it in Gandhi's case — which is his own greatness — turns this fast into the highest form of moral,

if not physical, coercion. It would be different if the man, who was fasting was not the Mahatma. We have seen the methods of a hunger-striker. They have not always been successful. Many, who have died in the attempt, are forgotten men. Some have succeeded and perhaps in these cases it would be accurate to say that fasting does result in the "conversion" of the other man. What other explanation could be given? But what Gandhi fails to realize is that although in his own opinion he associated himself with the poorest and the humblest of the country, he, nevertheless, occupied in India a unique position, such as has not been held before by a single individual and is not likely to be held ever again in this country. Circumstances have combined to make him the living incarnation of the soul of the Indian people. Such a man necessarily coerces when he fasts.

Let it not be thought that we disapprove of coercion. Jawaharlal Nehru once expressed the same idea to me and there are many others who agree that when Gandhi fasts he uses a most powerful weapon. It is only to show two different points of view on this modern form of Indian political tactics, that the question as to whether fasting is or is not coercion is discussed.

But to go back to the epic fast of September 20th, 1932. Almost at once leaders of all sections and parties got together to see what steps should be taken to remove untouchability in India. It was clear that the Macdonald Award could not be accepted. Hindu orthodox opinion had to take the initiative and by sacrificing some of its previleges, bring about a new and healthier outlook. There followed a breath-taking change in Hindu religion. It would be more accurate to say in Hindu social customs. The depressed class controversy was settled and one saw the unbelievable sight of temples being thrown open to the *harijans*. Never before had an untouchable been allowed to pollute even the shadow of it. Now, temple after temple opened its doors to him. On the question of representation, the Gandhian point of view was upheld and on this very vital matter, a substantial agreement was reached. Gandhi triumphantly broke his fast.

One must look back over the years and be familiar with conditions in India to appreciate the significance of his achievement. The presence of untouchables in our midst had been looked upon as a fact, which could not be denied and which could never be altered. Early in the history of India they had come into being because human labour had to be employed when modern sanitary conveniences were still unknown. The nature of the work these people did was enough to ostracize them from all society. This led to their segregation and with time they became a community, which was not fit for any other work but that which their ancestors had done. At the same time Hindu priests stiffened the ideas of morality and of cleanliness and incorporated in them the new prejudice that contact in any form with the untouchable was pollution of the worst kind. It was a regrettable state of affairs. Like cattle, these people were herded together in the worst slums of the city. They lived in the stink and the stench of the gutter in which they worked. Their lungs did not breathe a drop of fresh air. There was nowhere they could go without fear of being shunned. This humiliation, which was their heritage, made them withold from the things which were the birthright of man, because they knew that there were other people, stronger and more powerful, who had made it impossible for them to live life in the fullest sense of that term.

The *harijan* question has always been regarded in India as a social question. Treated as such, efforts have been made to educate public opinion in favour of the eradication of this evil. That was the method of social reform. But there was also another point of view. Even as the Mahatma refused to allow the perpetuation of their status, which would inevitably follow if the depressed classes were given separate electorates, there was a section of opinion, more realistic and theoretically Marxian, which believed that the solution of the problem of untouchability was only part of the greater and only problem of this country — the problem

of the economic emancipation of the masses. Once that was achieved in India, there would be no room for vested interests, for superstitions, for prejudices, for poverty — for any difference in opportunity in the lives of men. This may be a far-fetched ideal — socialism in its most abstract but complete form — but there were men in this country, who had the courage to believe in it. Perhaps it was due to the courage that Gandhi has inspired in them. For a cause like that of the untouchables, he had shown that he was willing to sacrifice his life.

XXVI

NEARING THE PRESENT

THE NEXT FEW YEARS PASS SWIFTLY AND IT IS difficult to chronicle events chronologically. The things that are happening in India are too recent and give us little time to ponder over them. We lose our sense of perspective as the image draws nearer. India has changed into something real. We can touch it. We can think in terms of ourselves and speak of our opinions, of our policy, of our future.

So much has happened in the last six years that I find it difficult to sort out the things that are permanent and lasting from the things which are merely transitory. What may seem important to us today from among this mass of detail may be of little importance when we look back on it through the years. Therefore, it is only possible to touch upon a few of these details, which I consider typical of the moment. Ours is not merely a political fight against British imperialism. It is also a fight for self-preservation. This instinct has crystallized itself into a national struggle, which has been shaped and

re-shaped from time to time by the genius of the Mahatma. If we still cling on to the Empire, it will be of our own free will. Britain may one day still be able to claim to have the brightest jewel, not in its Imperial Crown, but in the free Commonwealth of its Empire.

This brings us to one important question with which we are faced. It is the question of the moment — the acceptance of Federation. Not so long ago I read how Britain was determined to adhere to the Federal scheme in its entirety without changing so much as a comma from the bill which had been passed by Parliament. Yes, Britain was quite determined. But of late Britain's determination is one thing, its power to carry out that determination quite another. When Hitler was planning to regain the lost frontiers of Germany and Mussolini was shipping troops to Addis Ababa, Britain had expressed its determination never to allow such things to happen. Hitler would never step into Czechoslovakia. Nor Mussolini into Abbyssinia. That was Britain's determination, but it was whittled down and in the end Britain stood only for appeasement. Since then Britain has committed itself to a war, which will continue for sometime. It has not only involved itself but the whole British Empire. India shares part of that commitment without its own consent. One does not know what the end of it all will be, but it is certain that before long Britain will have to revise its attitude towards India. The days are over when the Englishman could wave his little Union Jack, sing "Rule Britannia" and really believe that the sun would never set on his Empire. India is aware of this, even as Britain knows that it would be foolish to attempt to thrust Federation on a people, who are unwilling to work it in its present form. Federation has to go back to the melting pot, in which it is hoped it will be shaped anew, even as the Viceroy recently said, to suit this country's real requirements.

A detailed analysis of Federation is not necessary, nor is it possible within the scope of this book. Those

who are interested in its finer points have the Government of India Act to study. Those who do not want details should be content to believe that it is a scheme for the government of India, which creates a federal structure out of British India and the Indian States, which, *with reservations*, will be the paramount legislative body governing the destiny of the whole Indian people. The reservations are the bone of contention, for so long as it is arranged that the voice and opinion of the representatives of the people can be made ineffective by nominated members and by executive authorities, acting in so-called emergencies to safeguard the peace of the country and to preserve law and order — the federal scheme is not of much use to the people of India. The real point at issue is whether Britiain will go so far as to give real power to the people as opposed to those who are merely the spokesmen of capitalism and the preservers of vested interests. If a "popular" government is possible under the Federal scheme, there is every reason to suppose that Congress will work federation at the centre even as it has worked autonomy in the provinces. As federation stands, however, we accept the Congress view that it is unworkable in India. The charge levelled against it is that its unworkability is inherent in the scheme itself. The priveleged position of the States, the scheme for representations, the safeguards, the provision for commercial discrimination, the method of indirect election intended to split the British-India representation, the communal award, the financial safeguard, the undemocratic States' representation and above all the complete lack of provision in the Act itself to ensure that this new scheme will achieve its original purpose, which was to give India the status of a self-governing commonwealth within the Empire, which had been promised to us for the last twenty years and to which we were told we were gradually moving — all this makes it impossible for any self-respecting Indian to give his support to a federal scheme and to work it with all his heart.

It is not only of our own people — the people of British India — that we are now thinking. Federation is to embrace the people of the Indian States as well and if we in British India have fought for the things that democracy has stood for, it seems hardly possible that we should now align ourselves on the side of autocracy to trample down our fellow-countrymen in the Indian States. The Congress is aware of this complete absence of democratic principles in the governments of the majority of the Indian States. Both Gandhi and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel have made the future of the Indian States' people a matter of concern to the Congress and the country. The question they have brought into prominence is — What part are the people of Indian States to play in the contemplated Federation ? It is not enough that we in British India should enjoy a substantial measure of self-government, when the time comes, if our fellow-countrymen, who by accident of birth happen to be subjects of an Indian State, are to remain in that same political servitude, from which we have only just managed partially to extricate ourselves. It is, therefore, intended that before Federation is accepted, the larger Indian States should be turned into constitutional monarchies, like England, dependent upon the will of the people. On the analogy of this, the smaller and insignificant states, whose rulers are no better than zamindars and are without the resources or the organization necessary to build these States up as constitutional monarchies, will eventually have to be absorbed either into British India or into the larger States, whichever might be geographically convenient. This absorption would be undertaken after due compensation had been given to those petty rulers, who might for the sake of expediency have to be deprived of their sovereign power. There does not seem to be any possible alternative for these small and widely-scattered, indigenous kingdoms. Had they been geographically more closely situated, one could have united them into one large Indian State.

These are the plans, which the Congress has in mind for ensuring that the people of the Indian States will in a Federal India be allowed to take a fair share in the government of their greater country. It is difficult to tell whether, after remodelling, Federation will be acceptable to the Indian people and whether the high-lights of the Congress will work it or whether the drive from the left will insist on something completely new. When the time comes, India may be in a frame of mind to work it, provided it can do so honourably. But one cannot forecast the fate of Federation with any certainty, when we live in an age when the whole world changes rapidly from day to day. We have seen a whole people go to bed one night as Czechs and wake up next morning singing "Deuschland Uber Alles." How can you prophesy in a world like this ?

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As I look upon India today I realize that we are gradually coming into our own. During the Congress regime the whole atmosphere of officialdom disappeared from the Secretariats. We had access to the men who handled our affairs. When you stepped into the Secretariat during the Congress regime to call on the ministers, you felt that you were a member of the public and that the ministers were your "humble servants." Public service was then an honour and a distinction. When the Congress took office we knew the names of our Home Members, our Finance Members and our Prime Ministers. They were not names that had made headlines in the past. So many of them had come from humble walks in life. School-teachers, small-town men, simple folk, landlords, who had sacrificed their holdings, and sometimes well-to-do people, who had sacrificed security and comfort for the sake of their country's freedom. Since then the Congress ministries have resigned from office on the war issue, but in the future Congress Governments will no longer be regarded as an experiment, and they will become a permanent feature of our life. They have grown up out of the struggle and we have seen

them working in nine provinces gallantly fighting to avoid the mistakes that are natural to a party in the first blush of its growing power.

To the sophisticated western mind these men provided gentle amusement. The average Englishman wondered how they would handle a knife and fork at a social banquet. But such was the order of the day that these trifles of etiquette were not important any more. We had shorn off much of the superficiality of living. Our concern was for the more fundamental things of life. This country cannot afford to retain the luxuries in which a hundred-and-fifty years of British rule have indulged.

The self-imposed and self-enforced cut in the salaries of the ministers, who accepted about a sixth to a tenth of the salary due to them, was staggering to many who had looked upon the Congress ministers as a bundle of opportunists. But these sacrifices have been made before our very eyes, and we believe because we have seen. The highest public salary of any Congress official of the Government was Rs. 500 a month. It gave place to a somewhat peculiar state of affairs, for a Secretary to Government, who worked under a Congress Minister, got as much as six times the salary of his immediate superior. Asked how such a system could ever work satisfactorily, a Congress Minister said: " After all I am only a servant of the public."

Officials in India draw salaries which this country can hardly afford. The Viceroy gets many times the salary of the Prime Minister of England and a quarter as much more than the President of the United States. Consider at the same time the wage-earning capacity of the average Indian, which is about a fiftieth of what the man-on-the-dole gets in England. A Governor of a Province in India, however small, gets much more than a Cabinet Minister. These figures in so far as India is concerned are not inclusive of allowances. Says the publication in the "Congress Political and Economic Studies" Series, entitled "Salaries of Public Servants": "The Governors

of the Presidencies of Madras, Bombay and Bengal, draw allowances on various accounts which amount to Rs. 5,61,500, and Rs. 5,15,600, and Rs. 5,86,800 respectively." Do you wonder we grumble a little about the way Indian money is spent by our rulers? Our sense of values has, therefore, changed. Titles are not recommended. Attendence at extravagant Government House functions is not deemed necessary for the fulfilment of a Minister's duties. It is on the contrary discouraged. Although our Ministers no longer throw themselves at the feet of the Governor, the tendency is to respect him and all other Englishmen with whom the Ministers in the course of their work come in contact. But respect must always be mutual and mutuality is a condition precedent to the paying of respect by Congress Ministers.

During the days of Dyarchy in India we had men of a different calibre at the helm of Government. They were Indians too, but their outlook was one of perpetual worship of the white rulers. They knew that they were ministers on sufference, without power, without the respect of the people, mere puppets who had been placed in high office by the British Government. On one occasion, a member of the public went to a Minister in the Bombay Government on a trifling matter, which did not require very much thought or attention. Even so the Indian Minister was not keen on committing himself without consulting his English Civilian Secretary. It was then suggested by the visitor that to save him the trouble of having to come again, the Minister could send for his Secretary immediately and dispose of the matter. The Minister hesitated and finally said in a plaintive sort of way: "I'll send for him, but will he come?"

I do not say that this is anything more than a trifling incident. Only we, who have watched the sudden change can appreciate and understand its full implication. I do not say that Congress ministers are all that can be desired. A great deal of weeding out will have to be done by and by. The incident in the Central Provinces

showed that the Congress was finding it necessary to enforce discipline within its ranks. Likewise a committee has been appointed to look into the question of corruption within the Congress. There are a number of people who get carried away by power and who use that power to their own personal advantage. But it is to the working of the Congress Ministries as a whole that we must look to get a fair idea of the Congress regime. When one looks at it from that broader point of view, one has to concede that the Congress has done great things for the country and that it has done them with courage in both hands. Those, who were sceptical, look upon this changing India with awe and admiration. Those who were despondent have begun to hope. Those who were confident that the Congress would fail, are a little ashamed of themselves.

I remember visiting for the first time one of the finer men in the Bombay Ministry. He was the Finance Member and his name was A. B. Latthe. No one seems to know what his initials stand for. It is not as if it was Stanley, or Ramsay or Neville. A quiet unassuming little man, elderly, his hair almost snow-white and unbrushed, he would pass unnoticed in a crowded railway compartment. There is an amusing story about Mr. Latthe which bears repetition. I cannot vouch for it, but I have printed it before and he continues to be friendly! It is said that not many years ago, when he was in the service of an Indian State, he gave a cheque to a prominent Parsi businessman in Bombay. The cheque was for a large sum and the Parsi gentleman suggested that it would be safer to cross the cheque. Mr. Latthe is *alleged* to have dipped his pen in ink and promptly drawn a large cross on the face of the cheque. Can one imagine the British Chancellor of the Exchequer doing this even in his undergraduate days?

As I entered his room in the Secretariat he was leaning back in his chair and tugging at a little *beedee*, the Indian equivalent of a cigarette and sold twelve to the anna. I had gone to see him because I wanted him to explain to me his great scheme of rural reconstruction.

As he looked at me he seemed to be perpetually engrossed in that vision of the future which was ever before his eyes. It was the vision of an India that was tall and strong, economically reconstructed and politically free. That was the India that men like Latthe were out to create. In his control, every year, came the fabulous sum of some twelve and a quarter crores of rupees. I told him that it must be a grand feeling to see so much money pass through his hands. "I never see or touch any of it except on paper", he smilingly replied. Even so it was something that we should have reached a stage in our political struggle, when we could feel that our money passed through Indian hands and through Indian control.

Sometimes he looked at me and through me, as if I were made of glass. He was always looking beyond and afar — past to-day and to-morrow into a future which was long and lasting. He was the man in whose hands lay the destiny of a hundred and seventy-five lacs of people — more particularly the eighty lacs, who constituted the more destitute portion of Bombay's rural population. Their very lives were in his trust — lives which were on the borderline of life and death. For that was the grim tale of our rural people — a tale which he hoped to tell in a different way, when his scheme of rural reconstruction was completed.

Often we speak of rural development, but it is an ambiguous term, for it may imply only a new system of irrigation. Latthe's idea was to develop the economic condition of the masses. He explained his scheme to me.

The first and perhaps the key problem of the cultivator was his accumulated debt. For years, from generation to generation, this debt has sucked his life-blood. He could never rid himself of it, however much he tried. It was his heritage. To combat this, legislation was necessary. There would then be a compulsory scaling down of debt. It would be brought down to a limit which is within the paying capacity of the agriculturist on an instalment basis. This agricultural debt was estimated at about eighty or ninety crores. It was the debt of the

cultivators, not of those who were rent-receivers. In the scheme which was to be put into effect, only the debts which were under fifteen thousand rupees would be helped. If over that sum, they would not come within the new legislation. Rural boards would be created for the adjustment of these debts and these would be formed entirely from among the rural areas, because the people on such boards would be familiar with the question before them.

Debts divided themselves into two main classes. Those which had been contracted before the depression period and those which were more recent. The depression was roughly judged to have begun from about the year 1930. For the former type of debt, any interest paid in excess of six per cent would go to mitigate the debt. In the case of those contracted after 1930, the real debt as distinct from the debt on paper would be ascertained. Also the Debt Adjustment Board would judge the paying capacity of the debtor. It would be reduced to eighty per cent of his paying capacity. Then the debt would be divided into so many instalments. If it was even then impossible for the agriculturist to meet his debt, some provision was to be made to ensure an easy process of rural-debt insolvency.

That was the cure. There was also provision made to ensure that no more fresh debts of a similar nature would be contracted. That was the prevention. For this, the Government made it possible for co-operative societies to function more actively than they did before. They gave the cultivator the necessary credit. But this credit was solely for the purposes of production. For marriages and religious ceremonies, the co-operative societies would give no credit. This was not all. Co-operative societies would also market the produce of these cultivators. So that there would be organized production and organized marketing of produce. For all this there would be a band of workers, trained at various centres, who would instruct the *ryots* in their new way of living. To start with, there would be a thousand centres. But

gradually he hoped that there would be a worker in every little village.

That was the scheme, in very simple terms, of a Congress Finance Minister. It was an eye-opener to many of us, who wondered what the Congress was doing that was different to what had been done in the past. The days were over when the presentation of a stud-bull by the Viceroy was regarded as a contribution to the rural life of the country. That belonged to an old regime and to an antiquated school of thought. The presentation of stud-bulls by the high Government officials and by the élite of our landed gentry had done the *ryot* little good. Here then was the real thing. You may call it rank socialism, you may call it the ray of hope, you may call it the five-year plan. But one thing was certain that here for the first time was something real — something that you could touch and feel was bread-giving — something that would go towards the improvement of this impoverished country of ours.

As I left the Finance Minister's room, something inside me began to say: "Here is life once more. Here is the urge to live. Here is a sorry and sad past fading away. Here is the dawn of great things to come." I have seldom felt so stimulated. And yet as I left, he was still tugging at his *bedee* — twelve to the anna — looking a million years away.

This was only one isolated picture of the Congress in office. But it was a representative picture. Individual provinces had their individual problems. But it was the general working of the Congress that was so stimulating. It contrasted so well with those few provinces in India, such as Bengal, where the Congress was not in power. Wherever I went in India, I felt the growing power of the Congress, and as I look back upon it, I realized that in the background of every great Indian achievement there lurked the shadow of the man, who made all this possible. Gandhi was the source of all our inspiration.

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One day I went to Bardoli. Geographically unimportant, strategically insignificant, this little village

has carved out a name for itself, which will go down in the annals of our history. One remembers the struggles of the past — the sacrifices — the sorrows and then one recalls the victories that followed and their significance. Symbolically, therefore, one cannot overlook Bardoli. It crystalizes the doctrines of Ahimsa, of non-violence, of civil disobedience, which have made it possible for us to put our foot on the first step of the ladder which may one day lead us to Swaraj.

There are only two houses of any importance there. One is a ginning factory, the out-house of which was our resting-place for the night, and the other was the Ashram across the road, where stayed the one man whose uncanny vision guided the destiny of our people. Nowhere could one find so much in so little. Nowhere did I find such a conquering spirit. Not far from Surat, Bardoli took a long time to reach. Things moved slowly in that part of the world. Time had not that great significance it should have. But what was an hour here or an hour there to a people to whom all hours of the day, the month, the year seemed so much the same. When some event of importance was in sight as when the Bombay Ministers were on a visit to the Mahatma, they waited for it patiently, without fretting, without murmur, without protest. These suffering people, who had sacrificed so much for a glimpse of the promised land, have with their sacrifices written the story of the Indian National struggle. You could see their faces bearing the scars of the wars they had fought — wars for the liberation of humanity. You could see their eyes reflecting the agonies of this world — the poverty, the squalor, death, disease, which once destroyed them as we destroy vermin, and which they hoped one day to be able to conquer.

That was the great lesson of Bardoli — this moral uplift of a down-trodden and fallen people. They had shown a courage, which compelled attention, a self-assurance which defied cowardice, a determination which made failure impossible. There was general happiness all round, which made me wonder whether I really was

living in the same world, in which Hitler was threatening the peace of Europe. How far away all these gruesome and ugly things were! How far away the black wings of death, that swooped over some street in Prague and destroyed the images of God and man that once stood in the churches and the temples, in the streets, in the homes, and even in the hospitals. Bardoli seemed a haven compared with all that. And how easily satisfied these people were. Money had a different value in this part of the world. With a thousand rupees you could almost live comfortably to eternity. I had only eighty rupees on me and yet I felt disgustingly rich. There they celebrated the fixing of a wage at four-and-a-half annas a day, because it only cost two annas to live and they never got so much before. I felt as I lighted each cigarette from my tin, that it was the equivalent of a substantial part of someone's meal. Life was so intensely real that there was no time nor opportunity nor inclination to dabble in unreal things. Art, music, letters — these were out of place in this world of reality. It was the land first, the land second and the land last. That was food — that was life — that was hope — that was the future. These people were attached to the land as we would be to our dearest ones. Their sentiments were almost economic. They thought in terms of oxen and harvests and a square meal, instead of colours and sounds and speeches. How else could they think, when life was a perpetual borderline existence? So too, love, sex and morals were only secondary relations — secondary to their relations with the soil, the land was the one great passion of their life.

Some four miles away, along a road, which brought back to me memories of a ride on a camel's back, there was a thanksgiving meeting, which two of the Ministers attended. It was to celebrate the coming of freedom to a class of agricultural labourers, who, although free persons in the eyes of the law, were by custom and usage reduced to a status of medieval serfdom. Those affected by this custom, peculiar cheifly to Gujerat, were a tribe of abori-

gines, called Dublas. Very dark in complexion, with shining jet-black hair, they had been reduced to this status for generations now. Father, mother, children were bound to their masters, body and soul. The Latin word "servus" could have had no better translation. Now these people would be free once again. Such was the work that had been done by the Congress of which we knew but little.

There were only three people, whose word was law in this part of the world — God, the Mahatma, and the Sardar. The beauty of it was that they spoke with one voice and had the same message for the people. That was why to-day, in the twentieth century at the end of the thirties, we saw happening the sort of things that some twenty years ago, we would have forecasted only as miracles. The liberation of the Dublas and acknowledgment of this freedom by those who had them in bondage was only one such miracle. For it was because of the respect they have for the Sardar and the Mahatma that they parted with their most staunchly guarded privileges.

Tired and weary, we returned to Bardoli and dined at the Ashram. Our meal was simple but wholesome. Sliced melon, raw tomatoes, two or three types of *Shakh*, a sweet, rice, milk and chapatis. You could eat as much as you wanted. There was no barrier of caste, creed or religion. No one was entitled to sit in any particular place. There were no A.D.C's, frantically looking through the precedence list to find out whether the Home Member or the Finance Minister should sit on the Sardar's right. How different it was from the regime that was gradually fading away.

All this was Bardoli. If Swaraj has come anywhere in India, it has come to Bardoli. The American motto of "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity" was translated into life and action there. The working of Co-operative Societies, the gradual rise to power of the masses, the growth of a sense of civic responsibility, the acquisition of ideas of cleanliness — all these are to be seen in this

little village of Bardoli. When the lands, which were confiscated at the time of the Satyagraha movement, were restored, the ultimate triumph of these people was reached. It was amazing to see how patiently they had waited for it. That triumph was not merely restricted to villagers of Bardoli. It was the symbolic triumph of India, of Satyagraha, of Gandhi and his non-violence. The people of Bardoli had supplied the driving force and the moral power to make this triumph possible. It was because of this that we paid homage to this tiny little village.

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I attended for the first time in my life the annual session of the Indian National Congress in the March of 1939. It was the fifty-second session and was held at Tripuri. Not many people had heard of that village until then and even the residents of Jubbulpore, which was the nearest town six miles away, were not conscious of its existence. But, for one brief week, Tripuri had been converted from a little, barren, uninhabited village into the symbolic capital of India, in which had gathered the representatives of its people. It had been elevated to the status of a great city to which the eyes of a whole country had turned. It was a city built of straw matting. It could have been blown away in an hour by the mildest of storms. Yet it had temporarily erected its own post-office, a bank, serveral book-stalls, innumerable shops, a *Khadi-bhandar*, water and light supplying apparatus, restaurants catering for various communities, car-parks, committee-halls, offices for the executive, whole camps of huts built of straw to house the delegates, other huts for the leaders, which were secluded from the noise and the dirt, office for the President and other executive officials, a press-camp, open baths, food-stalls, microphones, a Parliament house of straw, and sanitary arrangements, which would meet the requirements of over two hundred thousand people. This conversion from a village to a city of importance was to last for a week or two after which Tripuri would revert to the obscurity

from which it sprang, with only a stray peasant walking to and from his daily work to stir the dust.

It was my first experience of a Congress session and I was a little unsure of myself. Playing for safety I had accepted the invitation to stay with a friend in Jubbulpore. It was that comfortable bed each night, away from the noise of the moving crowds, the dust and the heat that made a great difference. But all day was spent at Tripuri — from early morning to a late hour of the night. My host was a government official. The car in which I drove to Tripuri each day belonged to one of the Indian States. And Tripuri was of course the Congress Nagar. It was a strange mixture. Somehow the host, the car and the Nagar blended in this new India. No loyalties were ruptured. The road to Tripuri from Jubbulpore was unreal in its setting. The black, rounded rocks along the narrow, winding road reminded you of the entrance to some pre-historic cave. The only touch of realism, ugly though it was, was in the chalked advertisements, which appeared on the large black boulders. One read: "Castophene for Constipation." It read persistently so for nearly two miles. What a thing to go to Tripuri for! One could not help smiling at the naivete of the people and their utter lack of sophisticated propriety, which resulted in grotesque advertisements. But when you take the broader view of life and take into consideration also that only six per cent of this country is literate, that early objection to the sight of Castophene on the rocks dies away. One realizes it is only the enthusiasm of a people who are moving faster politically than educationally.

That same afternoon I took my seat on the ground along with hundreds of pressmen, who had come from India and abroad. Everyone sat on the ground. It was the only way the Congress ever sat. Straw mattresses were between the earth and us. The pandal in which the Committee of the Congress assembled that day, was the centre of attention. It was for all intents and purposes the Parliament of the nation. On a raised dais,

well-padded with cushions, sat the President and the high command. As each mounted the rostrum, there was cheering varying with the popularity of the individual. I saw a pretty scene when Sarojini Naidu, affectionately called the Ninghtingale of India, embraced on the dais an old Marathi lady, who, in spite of her simple attire turned out to be a dowager Maharani. It made a pretty picture that touched the heart. It was Mother India in all its resplendent glory.

One watched with awe and reverence the galaxy of leaders who had gathered together in the service of their mother land. Only the Mahatma was conspicuous by his absence. He was still in Rajkot, having broken only that morning his sensational fast. But if you wanted to see the men who really mattered in India, as apart from the Viceroys and the Governors, you would find them mounting the rostrum, one by one, and taking their seat on the padded cushions.

There was Jawaharlal Nehru, the Sardar, the learned scholar Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the parliamentarian Satyamurti, the eminent lawyer Bhulabhai Desai, Babu Rajendra Prasad, the Chelsian Acharya Kirpalani, the quiet and unassuming Pattabhi Sitaramayya, the dynamic Frontier-Gandhi in the person of Abdul Gaffar Khan, the brilliant Rajagopalachari from Madras, the suave Vallabh Pant from the United Provinces and the two Bose Brothers, Sarat and Subhas. Subhas Bose was, of course, the President of that session. He had put himself up for office for a second time against the wish of the Mahatma and the orthodox Congress. Surprisingly enough he was returned successful, but it was a victory that was short-lived, because the numerical majority, which he had obtained at the election, was not stable enough to withstand the onslaught of the powerful and able forces that were launched against him at Tripuri.

To go into the matter of Bose's re-election as President and to discuss this question in the only way it can be discussed, would necessitate hurting the feelings and divulging the secrets of many people. It is with a certain

reticence that I have refrained from commenting upon it. It is the only course open to me. These events are so recent that it would not be fair to pass any final judgement on them. When Bose resigned later at Calcutta, my feeling was that the inevitable and the expected had happened. He had ventured too much in face of an opposition, the force of which he did not correctly appraise. There are certain people who thought the attitude of the high command towards Bose was similar to that which one would have expected in Europe from a Fascist dictator. Theoretically, this may or may not be true. Practically, taking into consideration the circumstances of the case and bearing in mind that no one man, with the solitary exception of the Mahatma, is indispensable to the Congress, one could not help feeling that Bose's resignation was sure to come. The tragedy of Subhas Bose was that he was too ambitious He had yet to realize that there were other men in this country who had made greater sacrifices without thought of reward or gain, who were more competent to discharge the office of President of the Congress and yet who were hesitant of taking up the great responsibility of that high office. Individually they were more powerful than him, collectively they could eclipse him totally and reduce him to a cypher. So long as the Mahatma lives, there is no possibility of any man, however great, wresting from him that position of undisputed leadership which he has held for many years.

But we turn to talk about less controversial things. The one figure that stood out at Tripuri in a class by himself was the uncrowned king of the Frontier, Abdul Gaffar Khan. To me he was a most awe-inspiring sight. For sheer personality he overshadowed all the others. The other leaders stood like puny men beside his commanding presence. Not the Mahatma with all one's affection for him, not Jawaharlal Nehru, not the Sardar, could cut half as striking a figure. Gaffar Khan brought back to mind all the great men of action, the soldiers of yesterday and the heroes of the day before — the Welling-

tons, the Joffres, the Fochs. He too was a soldier to the tips of his fingers. The way he stood with his hands on his hips, he looked a conqueror striding like a colossus from some vantage point, viewing the hordes of men of which he was the undisputed chief. When India gets her freedom he would be the right person to become the commander-in-chief of its forces. And yet the wonder is that this strong man from the North-West Frontier of India, who has lived his life amidst a civilization of tribal warfare, where tribal feuds were once almost of daily occurrence, where man shot man for a loaf of bread and did not recoil in the eating of it, and where the law of the land was: "An eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth"— that this strong man with all the martial resources at his command should come and bow and humble himself in the presence of the Mahatma. Well might one say that non-violence had gloriously triumphed.

Those who do not know India have often said that there is much in it which mystifies and baffles them. But what when those like me who were born and bred here are completely perplexed? It baffles us even more — we, who thought we knew something of the country in which we have grown up from little children into young men. What answer can we find for ourselves, except that we do not understand? But we have reached a stage in our lives when we do not always want to understand. Perhaps in future we will take greater care to convince ourselves, but of the past we can only say that we believed in it in blind faith without asking for conviction. We are a people who have the courage of our faith even though we may not have the courage of our convictions. It is an incredible story, but it is true and I vouch for it. It is the only story of the Indian people.

* * *

The climax of Tripuri was the open session. I cannot describe it better than I did in a short despatch I wired to my paper, *The Bombay Chronicle*. I had never seen anything like it in all my life. It was as if I was

wandering in a world that was new to me—wandering, because I was dazed. That despatch read :

"Two hundred thousand men, Khaddarclad, Gandhi capped, and women are gathered under the canopy of the heavens. Out of rocks is carved out a most imposing dais, high up and bearing the Tri-colour of a nation fighting for its liberty. It is dusk and the grey spreads like a pall over the evening, tinging the edges of the horizon in those brief moments before the darkness envelops it all. The Fezes of The Wafd delegates, who are the guests from Egypt, add a touch of colour and stand out against the background of white Khaddar. One can barely see the great leaders. But some stand out even at a distance. From the press benches in front, we get little idea of the people behind. Far back, many thousands of rows behind, is perhaps the last man. When this world is shown pictures of Nazi rallies under the Swastika of Adolf Hitler, one should also see how a down-trodden but democratic nation has arisen, at last, to walk over the face of this earth, its head held high and its self-respect regained. This dazzling sight is soul-stirring. Even the most blue-blooded among the English must generously concede, after seeing this glorious sight, that India has regained her soul. One becomes conscious of the rise of an oppressed proletariat, which has fought for its freedom to achieve at last a place among the free nations of the world. This then is the answer to a nation's prayer and the result of a long struggle for the liberation of humanity. *Vande Mataram.*"

XXVII

TODAY AND TOMORROW

ONCE I FELT VERY UNCOMFORTABLE IN INDIAN surroundings. I missed that coterie of intelligent, modern young people, whom I knew at Oxford, in London and in Paris — the capitals of Europe and the harbours of intellectualism. I had with many other young men of my generation acquired a taste for pleasure in the widest sense of the word, appreciating most the things in life that were sensuous, though not necessarily sensual. Ours was not an aesthetic appreciation of beauty, which could come under Matthew Arnold's idea of Hellenism, but it was certainly far away from Gandhi's conception of Brahamacharya. Our life was anything but one of self-abnegation. On the contrary it was so full of the desire to live in the senses, experiencing great loves, great lusts, great emotions and tasting continually the sort of things in life, which made you smack your lips if only for the joy of retaining some trace of it, that we could not possibly have time to see that greater ideal in life which consists of "giving" to others. I do not profess

to have qualified to wear the garb of an aescetic today, but even that little which has changed in me makes me feel more for my countrymen than I did before. Today I feel human and natural in the company of my own people, more so when I am surrounded by the very same dumb millions, I once dreaded approaching. I find in myself a power — however small — to help these people and the desire to help becomes more powerful than ever. It may sound horribly sentimental, but it is so.

I remember how beautifully happy I felt at that same open session of the Congress at Tripuri. It was different from the feeling one experiences when walking down the Champes Elysees with the floodlit Arc de Triomphe in the distance. Paris in the spring! Gay-lit cafés from which one heard faint strains of music and the chatter of conversation; the syncopation of a hundred hooting cars; the scent of perfume from a *modiste* shop in the *rue Royale;* the choir singing in the Sacre Coeur; the voice of the *prima donna* lifting the roof of the Opera; the smell of the metro; the cooked frogs at Fouquets; the furniture of the Louis's; the brandy of Napoleon; *buillabaisse;* silver foxes; high-heeled shoes; the bar of the Ritz in the *Place Vendome;* Manuel Pizarro at the Villa Rosa; the promenoir of the Folies Bergere; the statue of Venus in the Louvre; little cigarrette shops with the red diamond light; mannequins in the *rue de la Paix;* the El Grecos and the Mona Liza. Or London! — on some November evening in the fog down Piccadilly or in the side streets of the West End, pausing a little at Shepherd's Market to look at the small, unassuming house where Michael Arlen wrote *The Green Hat;* the bleak outlook from Hampstead Heath on a misty day; Epsom on Derby Day; the Royal enclosure at Ascot; Rolls Royces at the first-night of a West End play; Diana Wyniard as she comes out of the stage door; the Berkeley Grill; the site of your own article on the feature page of the *Daily Herald.* Or Oxford! — the beginning of term; the tail-coats hurriedly turning into the little lane of the Union; the front quad covered with snow; Addison's

Walk; the river in Eights Week; Sir John Simon at the Presidential debate; Einstein at Christ Church; Magdalen Choir cracking through the dawn; bicycles in the High; tattered gowns; scholars reading at the Bodleian; a twenty-first birthday party; the sight of your picture in the *Oxford Isis* — all these have given me a feeling different from the one I experienced while squatting on the mattressed floor of Tripuri. But for Gandhi, I might have missed the whole meaning of Tripuri, and I would, I realize now, have been the poorer for that loss.

I remember when that first day's open session was ended, I was hurrying to the Telegraph Office to shoot off my message to my paper and I got caught at the exit, which was crowded by peasants. I waited my turn. Near me two *kisans* were discussing the meeting. They had understood nothing, but were impressed. They spoke in Hindustani and one said to the other: "*Bahut lok, bahut lok — ek hazar admi hoiga.*" Terrific crowds! Terrific crowds — there must have been a thousand people.

A thousand people! How typical it was of their limitation. The kisan could only count that far. He had never had a chance of counting beyond. If Einstein suddenly discovered that time was equal to eternity plus two days, could we, ordinary people, grasp the significance of those two days? To us they would be superfluous. Eternity we understand, because though infinite, it is finite in our conception . And though we could understand eternity, eternity plus two days would be too much. In almost the same way, the peasant knew that a thousand was the limit of his conception. Beyond that, whether it was two or twenty or a hundred thousand, it was still only a thousand. Yet we could count a hundred thousand people that day. Once I would have laughed scornfully at this story; now I can appreciate it. Once too I would have told it as a bitter commentary on my own people; now, I tell it feeling a trifle sad.

Gradually I have come to realize that our problems do not require the approach of a sophisticated mind.

Our needs are such that we have to call cabbage cabbage, even when it is *sauerkraut*, because basically it is cabbage just the same. Somehow, we have to think in terms of basic principles and raw materials. They are our only salvation. The condition of India does not allow it any luxuries. The deeper I go into the heart of India, the more I realize how far it is from enjoying life, such as we have elsewhere seen. Even in the worst slums of Europe and America, there is that ray of hope, which has never penetrated rural India. How many an unemployed man on the dole in England has felt that one day his luck will change and that he will yet turn the corner of depression to walk the rest of his life on the broader and cleaner avenues of prosperity. This feeling may have no justification, but it is there all the same. The glamorous stories of many people, whose lucky star has led them to the doors of fame, rocketing them from complete poverty to wealth, from obscurity to the front page are the opium on which so many poor people continue to live. Not so in rural India. You cannot go to the villages of India and hold out the prospect of hope, when you know that life in its fullest sense can never come to these doomed people. Every possible approach leads them into a blind alley. Even the missionaries who have come to India, realize that all they can ever do for the Indian masses is to teach them to pray for their souls. Poor comfort — when you come to think of the loaf of bread which has been denied to them in their lifetime.

Yet, realizing all this, I feel that something can be done and has been done for the people of India. I feel more than ever the urge to do what little I can myself. It is an achievement when I bear in mind the background of my life — a small achievement perhaps, but nevertheless an achievement. It may be that we are only working for posterity, for we can never get anything more than a glimpse of the promised land. Perhaps, we can just see this country of ours on the threshold of its freedom, but there is the consolation that our children and our grandchildren will live in the freedom

and the self-respect which has been denied to us. Bearing this in mind I have learnt to appreciate that spirit of colossal sacrifice which underlies the life-work of the Mahatma and those who have, like him, devoted their energies to the service of their country. Their example has stimulated others. One begins to understand why it is that young men, who could live their lives in the normal comforts of their fathers' homes have enlisted in the service of their country, doing voluntary work of the most menial kind. That is what one finds everywhere in India. There is a spirit which makes no service too low for the greatest amongst us. Appreciating as they do the comforts of life, they are willing to play even a small part in the greater cause of the liberation of the people. They have their faults. There is a weakness of the flesh for petty gain and power. But these are to be found in any nation that has lived so long under foreign domination and which now sees the opportunity of grabbing the key-positions. But it is the broader aspect of the Indian struggle that is encouraging. One cannot help feeling that as a result of the national struggle, this country has gained in character. And that when the Indian walks in the wider streets of the world, he will be able to hold his head high, because he has fought for freedom — the greatest of man's possessions.

This is the most significant fact about the India, which has grown up with me. Wherever I have gone, I have seen the change that has come over the people. Even though we realize, that much of what we are fighting for, will be withheld from us for at least a generation, we have progressed far enough to be able to look back upon our progress with a certain amount of pride and satisfaction. And it is not only that we can look back so much as that we can look forward also. We see the vision of a free India become a reality even as we see the struggle that has yet to come — the fighting inch by inch because nothing can be taken for granted.

Gradually we have become conscious of a national existence. We have learnt to think in terms of this

national existence. It is reflected in many things which we do both consciously and unconsciously. To that extent we feel the Mahatma's power over us inasmuch as he is symbolic of that consciousness. In art, in literature, in the cinema, in painting, sculpture, architecture, music, dance and drama, even in commerce and industry, in the way we conduct ourselves, the things we do and say, this national consciousness is noticeably reflected. There has been a general cultural and religious revival of things that are Indian, which has its origin in the national upsurge, which Gandhi began. I do not say that without Gandhi, we would not have had Tagore, but that because of Gandhi we are able to understand and appreciate Tagore and other symbols of Indian culture. It is the regaining of our self-respect that is reflected in these various forms of self-expression. Gandhi has released tremendous forces which for years had been stifled because of the domination of a foreign culture and a foreign rule. Tagore is perhaps a world figure and cannot be compared, but to a lesser degree we have other symbols of this cultural and national revival. Uday Shankar in dance, innumerable young men who have made a mark in Indian painting and sculpture, others who have expressed themselves in writing, the various exhibitions of art which have been held in India, institutions which have sprung up all over this country which dominate the world of industry and commerce and shipping. The whole atmosphere of the country is changed because of them and those, who have watched this change happen, realize its true significance. There is something about this atmosphere that is like fresh air. You can breathe in it freely. It is like coming out into a glorious garden after years of incarceration in a prison cell, as if with the liberation of the body there was a corresponding and simultaneous freedom of spirit. We seem to find life where there was only slow decaying death.

Not so long ago, I went to the pictures to see *Mr. Smith Goes To Washington.* It had a very simple

theme — that of a young man who was elected senator because those, who put him in office, believed he would be only an echo of their voice. There was for the sake of the plot the usual clash between boyish ideals and the selfish interests of fellow politicians who worked for graft and self-aggrandisement. All that was not important, nor am I drawing any parallel. But there were moments in that picture which were unforgettable in so far as they conveyed to us that feeling of freedom which was the heritage of a free American nation. A great deal of this effect was no doubt to be traced to Frank Capra's direction, but wherever the credit lay, I remember how stimulated I felt when in the echoing, lonesome hollow of Lincoln Memorial, young Jefferson Smith stood, his head uncovered and suitcase in hand, looking on with awe at the statue of that President of the United States who crystallized for him the idea of liberty, which we in India were in our own way fighting to achieve. That was not all. Standing nearby were an elderly man and a little boy not more than seven years of age. The boy held the old man's hand and read the inscription on the wall. "Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the propostion that all men are created equal..." The voice of the boy penetrated my soul as in the solemn silence of that memorial, those words were uttered by one of a generation that had yet to blossom into manhood. And as he come to the end of that immortal Gettysburg speech, a little tired, for he was only a kid, the older man with greater emphasis finished the words "and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth."

That was only a shot from a Hollywood film. To me, however, it had great significance. Whereas to the American people it was only intended to serve as a reminder of their free estate, these vivid scenes stimulated us to the very core. So it was too when we in India saw *Juarez*, though later we found that the most telling

passages in the Mexican President's speech were cut from the picture. We are able to appreciate these pictures because freedom and democracy mean something to us. It is the result of this change which Gandhi has brought about in our sense of values. Today we walk on the face of our country knowing that it is poor but that it is our own. We know that a new order has come into being, an order which has been ushered in by men, who have once been beaten and trodden upon, but who have risen from the ground and walked triumphantly on.

I recall the days of my youth when such a word as freedom we hardly heard. My mind swiftly flies across the long span of years and vaguely hits upon a certain afternoon, when I remember leaning on the verandah of our bungalow at Mazagon, watching one of our servants being dressed up in khaddar clothes and a Gandhi cap in order that he could safely get to the other end of the town. It was during the height of the first non-co-operation movement. I do not remember the month or the year. I only know that it was the first time I heard the words "Mahatma Gandhi." Nor did I think it was of any importance at that time. My only interest was in the servant's masquerade as if a white Russian was making a dramatic escape from the revolution. It was only an isolated incident, but I have never forgotten it. Everything seems to go back to that afternoon and stop. Perhaps it was the beginning of my national consciousness, even though it belongs to a chapter I would rather entitle "Make Believe."

There are other great social changes that are to be traced to the advent of Gandhi. There has been a decided change in the status of women, which dates from their entry into the political arena. Women today play a prominent part in our affairs and share in the sacrifice that this country is often asked to make. It is almost unbelievable to see Indian women step out from the zenana and walk straight into politics in the short space of a decade. All over India their presence in the open is

encouraged and even the most orthodox do not shudder at the emancipation they behold.

I have seen at Congress meetings whole troupes of women working ungrudgingly all day if only to supply the crowds with drinking water. I do not claim that this is any great national service, but when you see girls, who come from comfortable homes and from good, respectable families, some of whose fathers (as for instance in the case of the Advocate General of Bombay, who earns approximately Rs. 15,000 a month) are men, who are not only rich but who also occupy high positions in India, you begin to look for the motive that has prompted such girls to do voluntary service for the Congress in the shape of carrying water to thirsty crowds in the sweltering heat of the country.

Among the more enlightened Indian women two stand out for recognition — Sarojini Naidu and Vijayaluxmi Pandit. These are products of national India. With a certain liberty of expression pardonable on such occasions, I might call them "the daughters of Gandhi." I think they are wonderful women and I always feel a sort of juvenile adoration for them. I look upon them as typical of the womanhood that has evolved in India — intelligent, hard-working, self-sacrificing, kind and human, always sparkling with the freshness of life and very sincere. To be in their company is like reading the poetry of John Keats.

One other great social change is in the status of the untouchables. For thousands of years they were the victims of superstition and orthodoxy, tyranny and obscurantism, living their lives in the filth and stench of a Dherwada and a Kumbharwada. Although I have recently heard men like Dr. Ambedkar, who belongs to the depressed classes and represents them on the platform and in the assemblies, criticize the Congress in a scathing manner for the things it has left undone for the untouchable, I feel that even this embittered man will in his heart acknowledge that the social freedom which he enjoys today and which his class have to some extent

acquired, is to be traced to the work of the Mahatma. In the heat of many a discussion, when issues relating to the Scheduled classes have been raised, it is natural for Dr. Ambedkar and his followers to become intensely critical of the Mahatma and the Congress. But Dr. Ambedkar knows that he owes some gratitude to the man who has made it possible for him to be what he is today — a free and equal man in the hierarchy of Hindu caste. The opening of the temples to the untouchables is symbolic of social as well as spiritual freedom. It is all part of the awakening — the first streaks of light that herald the new dawn.

The feeling which we experience in the India of today is a comparatively satisfying feeling. It has helped to mellow the bitterness within us. It is reflected in our attitude towards the Englishman with whom we come into contact. Perhaps some credit must also go to the new type of young Englishman that has come in our midst. He realizes, as his predecessors did not, that the old order has changed yielding place to new. India has fulfilled itself in many ways. He sees how gradually the British domination is fading into comparative insignificance. He watches the empty ceremonial of state functions and knows that it is not enough to keep an Empire going. He has found out that in the India of today it is not with the protection of the British Army that he must live but with the good-will of the people. He realizes that he has now no other alternative but to play by our rules.

When the last war ended and the Allies had successfully but not so gloriously triumphed over the enemy, a little tablet was erected by the French at the spot where the Armistice was signed. Translated it says; "Here lies the criminal pride of the Germans, vanquished by a free people, whom they tried to enslave." We want no such record of victory. We do not want to glorify a sad and sorrowful past. We want to erect no monuments which will harbour the hatred which we once felt. We are more generous than those who out of a fable

erected a monument to the Black Hole of Calcutta. We want rather to erect a monument of peace to those who helped to bring about an honourable peace, if peace will ever come. It would be a memorial as much to the Christian in Lord Irwin as to the Indian in Gandhi. It would be a monument to all the unknown soldiers that have fought in this long war for the liberation of a large section of humanity. Someday too there will come to life a generation of Indians able to speak of "a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." They will picture then the little figure of the Mahatma stalking over the Indian scene. They will remember him throughont the ages as the man that made a new India possible.

I once expressed to Humayun Kabir, a distinguished contemporary of mine at Oxford and of whom it has been said that he writes some of the finest Bengali prose, this idea of our being raised out of dust by the Mahatma and made into men. I knew he would understand the imagery. Sometime passed and he wrote to me enclosing in his letter a few lines, which crystallized my thoughts for me. Speaking of the Mahatma's influence over our country he said:

"A puny figure strides upon the scene
Of vast and elemental suffering. Strides
Against a background where slow death
Paints in dull phantasmagorial grey
The end of all endeavour, hope and faith.
Some secret magic transforms the scene.
The static, dead and slothful continent
Thrills to song of hope, of forward urge.
The momentum gathers, the masses shake
And strain and quiver for the onward march
From slow decaying death to resplendent life.
A lonely figure stands upon the sands of time,
Stands upon the shores of India's timeless space,
Draws upon its vast and primeval wells
Of granite suffering and immemorial hopes:
Launches India's resistless caravan

Into adventures new, a perilous path
Where from life's substance must be carved
New values, new direction, order new."

When I finished reading these lines, I felt that the Mahatma's life has had some meaning.

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Exactly a year has passed since the Congress met at Tripuri. It is a year that has moved on rapidly from one sensation to another, with the ticker-machine gallantly keeping pace with events all over the world. As I look at my book of cuttings I realize how hopelessly impossible it will be for the historian of the future to assimilate the material.

From our point of view, the news from abroad is summed up in one headline sentence — WAR DECLARED. That seems to be the culminating point of the news from Europe. All other news from Europe fades into comparative insignificance.

During the last days of peace, if peace it could be called, I sat at home listening to the radio as it flashed messages from every station in the world. I would get up in the middle of the night and switch it on again to see if any stations were alive and if they had anything new to say. In those few days I was further away from India than I have ever been. I thought in terms of those I had known in Europe and wondered whether I would ever see them again. I visualized the gloom over London and Paris and in the homes which would be sending their sons to fight for humanity and liberty and those glorious things for which this war was apparently being fought. I thought also of that day at the Union at Oxford when David Graham moved that "This House will under no circumstances fight for its King and Country." Would those who voted for that resolution be fighting now ? Would I myself fight if it was my country ?

I only knew that I wished more than ever to be there to see England and more particularly France in the hour of their crisis. These are moments in the

history of the world which must be experienced if we are to say that we lived in those moments at all. But I was not destined to be in Europe then. Instead I was to see a picture of indifference, which was at that moment almost indecently shocking. India as a whole was indifferent to the declaration of war. I do not think the majority of the people were aware of its significance and those who were, were only concerned with the effect it would have on prices and commodities and industry in one form or another and the stock exchange. The human aspect was only secondary to the commercial and industrial. Such was the mental attitude of the class of Indian that is called the average man-in-the-club.

I felt sure that the Congress and the Mahatma would give the right lead to the country and that they would present the situation to us in its correct perspective. The Congress did not disappoint us. The Working Committee's resolution on war which bore the stamp of Jawaharlal's drafting was something after our heart. It showed a generosity which was in keeping with our best traditions. Yet it was cautious, carefully worded and dignified in tone and utterance. It did not bargain for privileges, but at the same time it did not presume, as I mistakenly did, a change of heart on the part of Britain in its attitude towards India. The Congress had learnt by experience not to presume anything. Jawaharlal struck the right note and expressed his own and the Congress official opinion, when in a statement from Rangoon he said: "The war is going to change the face of things. The old order is dead and cannot be revived....I should like India to play her full part and throw her resources into the struggle for the new order." This was also the gist of the Congress resolution. We felt that for once we could take part in a righteous war on the side of Britain. It had been made abundantly clear that India condemned the Nazi aggression. But we felt that we should have some assurance that the principles we were called to fight for would also be applied to us and that at the end of the war we should share in the triumph of the liberation of

humanity. We did not want to remain an anachronism when the rest of the world had moved with the times.

Political events moved fast and the representative of the Crown parleyed with the representatives of the people. Fifty-two Indians, picked from the galaxy of talents and interests in this somewhat mixed country of ours, made the pilgrimage to Simla only to find that they could not worship in the Imperial temple on equal terms. In reply to the Working Committee's demand for a clarification of Britain's war aims and a statement of British intention with regard to India, Britain made a disappointing reply. Zetland and Linlithgow made it clear that Britain still wanted to shelve the issue and that it would not commit itself to the granting of India's freedom when the war was over.

The war, therefore, has changed the whole aspect of things. When I returned to India two years ago, the the atmosphere was peaceful and there were no traces of the unrest that prevails today. Congress was in office and at many vital points there was harmony between the ministers elected by the people and the permanent officials of Government. Now the position is again altered. The responsibility of government has been thrown back on the Governors in all the provinces where the Congress ministries were in office. The resignations of these ministries became imminent once the country was pledged against its will and without its consent to a war, however righteous that war may have been.

The Congress attitude is very clear. It is obvious that the Congress want to co-operate with Britain if co-operation could be given honorably and if there is some assurance that at the end of the war there would be complete independence granted to this country — independence of a kind which is not fettered by innumerable qualifications. The way Britain has behaved after the last Great War cannot be easily forgotten and the Congress have necessarily to take all reasonable precautions.

However, for the present, Britain has turned down this offer of willing co-operation. Already the various acts and ordinances and budgets that have followed in the wake of the declaration of war, have indicated that in the absence of willing co-operation, Britain intends to enforce co-operation. A situation has, therefore, arisen which has given rise to a conflict of interests and the eyes of the country are turned to the Mahatma, because it is he who will decide in the near future what action this country and its national Congress will take in answer to the attitude that Britain has taken up.

There is a school of thought, led chiefly by Subas Bose, which wants to plunge the country into a campaign of direct action, the consequences of which I shudder to contemplate. But the influence of the Mahatma has made any premature decision impossible. When this country is ready for civil disobedience, which is the form of direct action contemplated, then alone will he give it the lead. In the meantime, the emphasis is in the direction of preparation for satyagraha. Non-violence must be understood by the people and only when it is infused into their blood-stream will this country be declared ready for action. Not till then. Such was the verdict of Mahatma Gandhi — a verdict that was almost universally endorsed by the delegates at Ramgarh.

Earlier in the book I have referred to Gandhi's restraining influence over India. This has never been so evident as it was at Ramgarh and those who attended that Congress sessions and who were in a position to feel the pulse of the country say that but for Gandhi, the Congress would have voted unanimously for a resolution calling upon the country to start immediately a campaign of civil disobedience. The hitch today in launching such a direct-action campaign is that the people are too willing and the danger is that though they may now accept the method of non-violence in principle, they may, once the struggle has begun, take up the attitude that violence is inevitable. And Gandhi does not want to make the mistake of finding that the people

have not yet imbibed the fundamental principles of satyagraha. If he was sure of his people and sure that whatever the provocation they would remain non-violent resisters, he would start civil disobedience within a week. And it is only because he has not that feeling of assurance that he is holding on to the reins and pulling back a force that wants to go forward. We witness, therefore, the strange contradiction of a people being held back by its national leaders because the Mahatma does not want to precipitate the next struggle.

This apparent contradiction disappears when you bear in mind the nature of the struggle that is to come. It is to be entirely different from the others. It is not intended to be a mere protest against Britain's Indian policy. It may be provoked by these factors and the resumption of civil disobedience may be immediately traced to such causes, but the end in view is not of a transitory character. The Mahatma has clearly said that the coming struggle is to be a final one. It is not merely to obtain a few concessions that he will start another country-wide campaign, but to get for us at long last the essence of freedom. There is a touch of finality about his conception of the next struggle for freedom — something that will alter fundamental conceptions of government and make new and decisive changes in its character. India will be governed *de facto* and *de jure* by the Indian people instead of from Whitehall as it is now. There will also be a constitutional change which will be recognized by the people of England as much as by the people of India. Gandhi is emphatic on the constitutional aspect of the change, and his methods will remain non-violent even though they may appear a trifle unconventional. If the coming struggle is to end in a victory for India, then it must carry with it the ultimate acknowledgement of those who are called upon to divest themselves of power. A struggle intended for such an end cannot be too hastily begun and whatever may be the tempo of the people, he will not be hustled into any form of action which he might later have cause to regret.

What stands out at the moment, even as it has done all through his political life, is his insistence on non-violence. Non-violence is undoubtedly his greatest contribution to India and to the world. Satyagraha with all its implications has been the one weapon he has used in this fight for the liberation of his people. No other country has made its bid for freedom in this essentially non-violent way. Not Russia, nor France, nor Ireland. There have been lapses due to the fickleness of human nature and the weakness of character among his followers, the excitement of politics and the climatic conditions in which we live. Tempers get easily frayed in the tropical sun, but it is the general tone of the struggle that has remained remarkably non-violent. Chauri Chaura and other such instances make us now feel ashamed. The more the masses will be educated and the more they imbibe the philosophy of Gandhi the more chance there is that in the future these will not recur. But even this chance Gandhi does not want to take and the mood of the country is such that Gandhi will think well before he plunges it into civil disobedience. Gandhi wants, even as many of us do, that when the full story of the Indian struggle is written and handed down to posterity, we should have reason to feel proud that we belonged to a period in the history of our country when this new force of non-violent resistance was evolved and that it should be an example to the world, which is now rocking in the arms of the fiercest violence that has sprung up on the surface of civilization. And not till his inner voice tells him that India is ready for such a non-violent struggle will he begin civil disobedience in India.

There is one other reason which prevents him from acting immediately. He has not overlooked the present internal condition of India. When you look back through the years and see the unity that existed between the two major communities in 1921, you begin to feel the strength of that united and national effort. Then the Khilafat was the one burning question of the moment

and the Ali brothers and the Mahatma were so close that you would hardly see them apart. There was a oneness of purpose and mind that fired the imagination of the whole country. One spoke and thought in terms of one people. There were no divisions and sub-divisions amongst us. Today there is a different tale to tell. From an eminent Muslim leader, Mohamed Ali Jinnah, we hear for the first time that there are two nations in India and that culturally and in every other way they have nothing in common. "The Hindus and Muslims have two different religions, philosophies, social customs, literatures. They neither intermarry nor interdine and indeed they belong to two different civilizations which are based mainly on conflicting ideas and conceptions," says Jinnah and therefore he has put forth an idea of carving out of this great country of ours two states — a Hindu and a Muslim State. The latter is to be called Pakistan. This attitude of Jinnah although it has not the support of the majority of Muslims in India is, even so, unfortunate. It means that our ranks are to some extent divided and the discord that it gives rise to throws this country open to the danger of communal rioting, if Gandhi were to launch his campaign of civil disobedience now. The gulf has been fully exploited by Britain and the result is that at the most crucial stage of the national struggle, the question of freedom is obscured by the communal problem. Nothing more unfortunate could have happened and wherever the blame lies we have to face the fact that we are at the moment, because of our lack of unity, weaker than we would otherwise have been.

It is not possible to examine Jinnah's idea at great length. Nor do I feel that this idea has gained sufficient ground in this country to compel such a critical examination. The more enlightened Muslim opinion, which is also the opinion of those that are nationalist rather than communal at heart, is expressed by the present Muslim President of the Congress. In his presidential address at Ramgarh he said: "I am a Muslim and I am proud of that fact. Islam's splendid traditions of

thirteen hundred years are my inheritance. I am unwilling to lose even the smallest part of this inheritance. The teaching and history of Islam, its arts and letters and civilization are my wealth and fortune. It is my duty to protect them.......But in addition to these sentiments I have others also, which the realities and conditions of my life have forced upon. me. The spirit of Islam does not come in the way of these sentiments. It guides and helps me forward. I am proud of being an Indian. I am part of the indivisible unity that is Indian nationality. I am indespensable to this noble edifice and without me this splendid structure is incomplete. I am an essential element which has gone to build India. I can never surrender this claim...... Eleven hundred years of common history have enriched India with our common achievements....Everything bears the stamp of our joint endeavour. There is indeed no aspect of our life which has escaped this stamp. Our languages were different but we grew to use a common language; our manners and customs were dissimilar, but they acted and re-acted on each other and thus produced a new synthesis. This joint wealth is the heritage of our common nationality." Thus spoke Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, a devout Muslim who touches Islam at every phase of his life and existence. He shows how there is nothing in Islam that is ineonsistent with the idea of an Indian nation. The India that has grown up in the last fifty or hundred years bears the stamp of a joint endeavour by these two major communities. You cannot now separate the two and still hope to preserve the edifice. And that is something that is lacking in Jinnah's theory — this realization that what we are today is because of a joint endeavour. Apart from the impracticability of dividing this country, it would be a pity if this great country of ours were to be broken up into fragments which can have no place nor position in the great world order that will come to this world when there is peace again on earth. It was great disappointment to many young men of my generation who had

looked up to Jinnah with a certain respect, which his manner commands, that it should have fallen to his lot to come forward with an idea of creating two nations in India. O Iago! Iago, the pity of it, Iago. Let them intermarry, let them interdine, so, that at least their children and their children's children will grow up to think in terms of a common life and a common ideal rather than that they should undo the work of many generations who have served and sacrificed their lives in the service of what they and we have learnt to call "our mother country."

Such is the state of affairs in India to-day. When we demand from Britain the right to our independence, we do so with the full realization of these shortcomings. They do not alter or affect the national demand. I doubt very much if that determination to be free will ever change. It is the message of the Mahatma that has been ingrained in our soul. In that spirit do we await the morrow.